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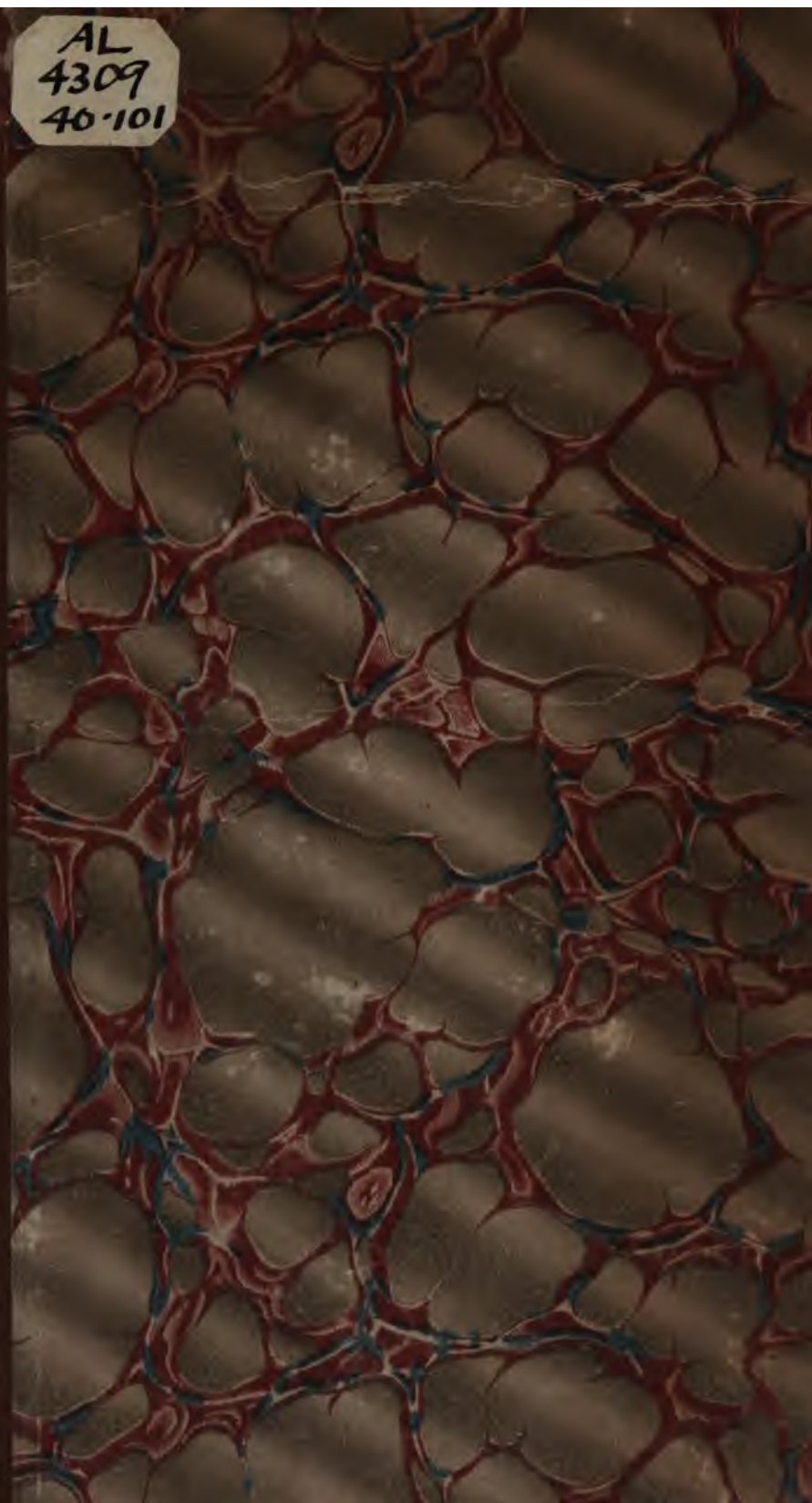
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Cell of the Bower. 1846



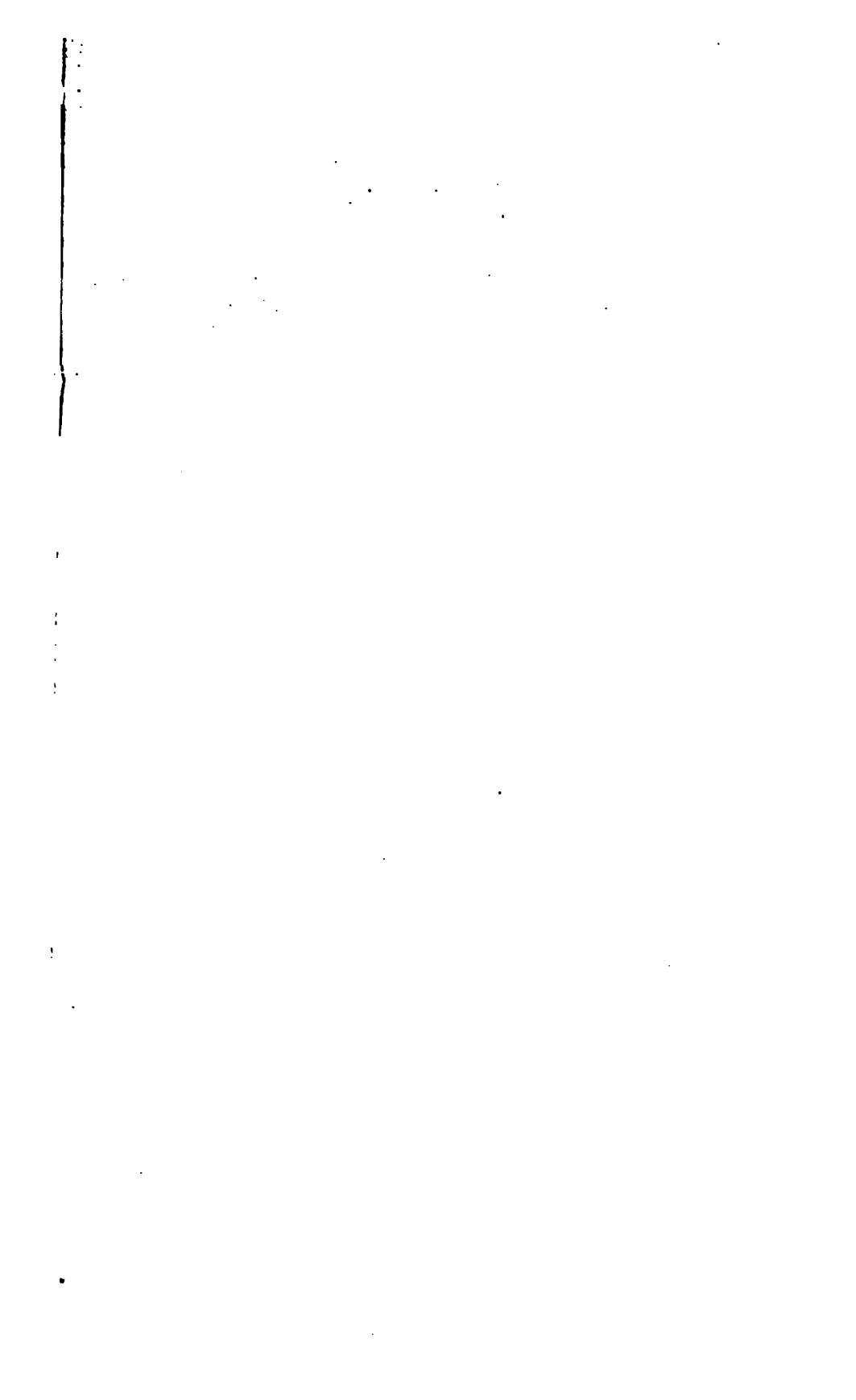
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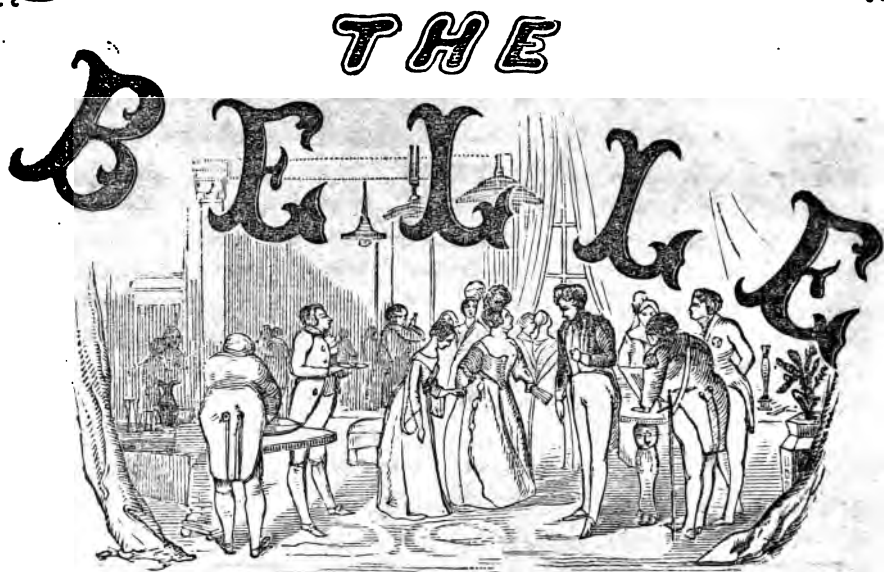
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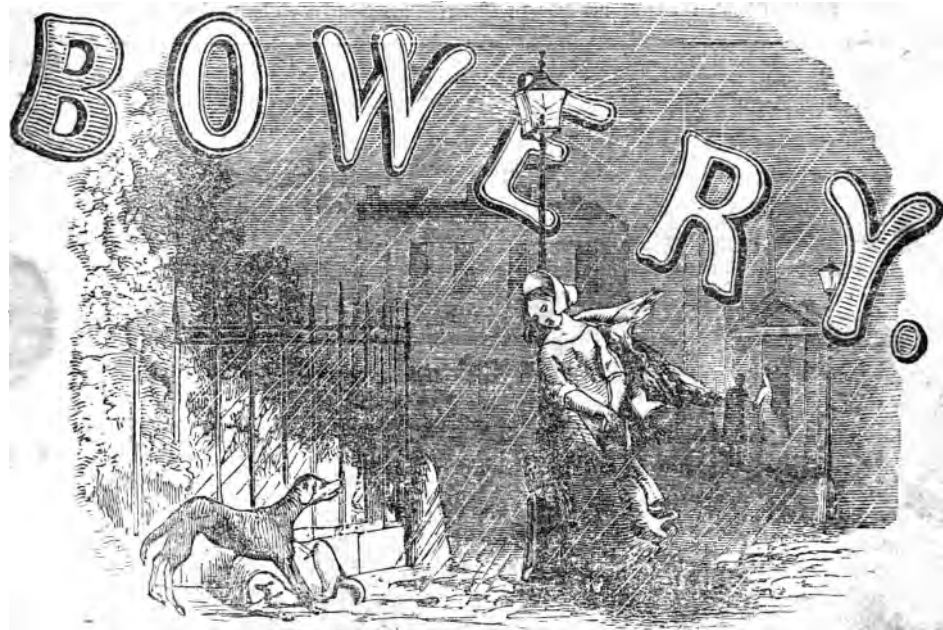
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OF THE



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THE BELLE OF THE BOWERY.

CHAPTER I.

'The town has tinged the country; and the stain
Appears a spot upon a vestal's robe,
The worse for what it soils. The fashion runs
Down into scenes still rural; but, alas!
Scenes rarely graced with rural manners now.
Time was, when in the pastoral retreat
The unguarded door was safe; men did not watch
To invade another's right, or guard their own;
Then sleep was undisturbed by fear, unscared
By drunken howlings; and the chilling tale
Of midnight murder was a wonder, heard
With doubtful credit, told to frighten babes.'



DESS I'll try the old skin-flint once more, as my sick wife has requested,' said Richard Preston, as he turned up a narrow alley, in which Mrs. Cottle resided. 'But I fear it will be of no use, as my wife and Louise have both been on their knees to her, and implored her help. O! Mrs. Cottle is an inexorable woman, or she would, ere this, have yielded to her sister's prayers, or to the tears of her niece. It is indeed humiliating to my pride to ask alms of such a miserly, dishonest, and corrupt woman; but justice demands a portion of her ill-gotten wealth, and I will entreat her once more to have some feeling for a sick sister, whom she has defrauded. The sickness of my wife may soften her hard and flinty heart. And yet what reason have I to hope? The wretch knows that her sister is fast going down to the grave; but she

has never visited her! More than one thousand dollars has she defrauded my wife of, and has it now hoarded up in her house; and not a penny will she give to relieve the distresses of an only sister. O, God! how different are the fortunes of the human race! One portion live in splendor and luxury, while another are starving for bread! The thought struck me last night, when I was awakened by the groans of my wife, that Heaven would wink at my crime, if I should rob Mrs. Cottle of some of her ill-gotten treasure. Rob! No, no. Richard Preston has never robbed any one but himself, wife, and Louise!

Thus communed this man with his own spirit, as he was on his way to Mrs. Cottle's, to ask of her charity for his wife. Just before he reached the house in which this miserly woman resided, he came opposite a dram shop. The temptation was too strong, and he could not resist it. He went into this low grogery, but he had no three cents to pay for his liquor. The keeper of this three-cent establishment was a short, fat, blousy-faced man, and looked as if he were a good customer to his own bar—as in fact he was. The name of this retailer was Walter Blacker. He had long been engaged in stirring the toddy-stick and rinsing tumblers. Preston had spent a good deal of hard-earned money at this establishment. He was once able to pay his bills; but now his thirst had greatly increased, and his means of satiating it very much diminished. He was a perfect slave to his appetite for strong drink. He would willingly do almost anything except steal, to gratify this raging thirst for liquor. The rumseller knew him perfectly well, for he had a great hand in making poor Preston what he was. As soon as he entered this den of vice and corruption, Blacker's grey eyes were upon him, and he said in his own heart that he could not be accommodated unless he had the money to pay. Preston stepped up to the dirty counter, and fastened his eyes upon the decanters which sat in a row upon the shelves on the other side, not more than five feet from his nose. Ah! who but the drunkard could tell the feelings of Preston's stomach at that moment, while he stood in tattered garments, without a cent in his pocket, gazing upon the liquors which sparkled in those decanters! Blacker saw him, but he had no sympathy for him; for as yet he knew not what it was to thirst for the poison without the means of obtaining it. Preston had been refused many times at this bar, and he expected to be then; but this only added to the fire which was burning the coats of his stomach and drinking up his blood.

'Come, Blacker, let me have one glass of your cheapest rum,' said Preston, in a tremulous, imploring voice, 'I'm dreadful dry, having had none since the morning.'

'You know me well enough to believe that I shall not trust you with another glass, until you pay up the old scores,' replied Blacker. 'You owe me now for three glasses, which you promised to pay me more than a week ago.'

'I know it, Mr. Blacker; but my wife has been, and is now, sick,' replied Preston. 'I'm dreadful poor, and it hurts my feelings to see my wife and daughter without bread, as they sometimes are.'

'Well, my wife and children would be destitute of bread, if I trusted my liquor to such miserable fellows as you are,' said the unfeeling and heartless rumseller.

'But if you will give me one glass, I will certainly pay you for it, and for those I had a few days ago,' answered the poor inebriate.

'I dare not trust you any more, Preston,' said Blacker. 'The next excuse you make will be, perhaps, that your daughter is sick.'

'O, God! I hope Louise will not be sick! for who would take care of her mother?' asked Preston, while his lips trembled, and his breast heaved with great emotions.

'What kind of a looking thing is your daughter?' inquired this rumseller.

'What kind of a looking thing!' repeated the drunkard, feeling for a moment the emotions of a father's pride rising in his heart; 'why, Blacker, my Louise is a very handsome girl, although I say it.'

'How old is she?' inquired the rumseller; 'old enough for a beau, eh?'

'She was sixteen years of age a few days ago,' replied the trembling father.

'Then why do n't you let her earn you something, so that you can have some change in your pocket to pay for your liquor?' inquired Blacker. 'If she's handsome, she might earn some dollars every week.'

'She is obliged to take care of her mother,' said Preston. 'Her mother has been confined to her bed for nearly three weeks, and Louise is constantly attending upon her. Ah! she is a good girl, and would to God she had a better father!'

'She could earn you money and not leave your house, only let it be

known to some of the young bloods of the city that you have a beautiful daughter,' said Blacker, while a smile passed over his bloated face, and a devil lurked in his twinkling grey eyes.

'Why, Blacker!' exclaimed the inebriate, in a voice which showed the indignant feeling which pressed his heart. 'No, no; I will say no more about that. Come, give me one glass. I see you have a pile of wood at your door. I will saw it for you to-morrow.'

'You need n't look so indignant at what I said about your daughter,' replied the rumseller. 'You may yet be driven to do it.'

'By heaven, I never shall, so long as I have my senses!' said Preston. 'No, no, Blacker; Louise is not only handsome, but virtuous; and may she always continue so. Her mother has taught her many valuable lessons. I hope Louise will heed her mother's advice better than I have. But enough of that. The liquor!—I'm in a hurry to-night, for I'm going to see my wife's sister. I will saw your wood to-morrow.'

'I'm afraid that your wife will be so sick that you will not come,' said the rumseller, in a sneering manner.

'No, no, friend Blacker; I will surely come,' replied Preston, while his eyes were fastened upon the decanters, and his stomach burned with raging thirst.

'I will trust you once more; but remember, if you do not come to-morrow, as you have promised, you'll never get another drop of liquor in my shop as long as you breathe,' said Blacker, handing down a decanter filled with poor rum. The poor inebriate seized it, and poured out nearly or quite two glasses, and drank it off.

'You drink deep this evening,' said Blacker. 'In spite of your hand about the tumbler, I saw it was almost full,—twice the quantity I sell for a glass.'

'I know it; but I was terrible thirsty,' replied Preston. 'Going on important business to-night, I wanted something to cheer my sinking spirits.'

'What business that is so important?' inquired Blacker.

'I'm going to see if my wife's sister will not hand over some of her silver,' replied Preston, beginning to feel the rum work in his brain and revive his spirits. 'She has more than a thousand dollars of my wife's money, and I'm going to make an appeal to the old skin-flint this evening, for my wife has requested me to do so, now that she is confined to a bed of sickness.'

'Who is this woman?' inquired the rumseller.

‘Mrs. Cottle, who lives at the other end of this alley,’ replied Preston. ‘Her house is not very splendid, but she has the money, notwithstanding.’

‘Mrs. Cottle!’ repeated the rumseller, opening wide his eyes, and gazing at Preston as if he thought there might be some chance of his getting some money. ‘Why, that woman is rich! I hope your appeal will be successful. If it is, and you raise some funds out of her, you know, Preston, where you can get good liquor cheap. Come, it’s my treat now.’

Blacker took down a decanter containing some rum of a better quality than the poor inebriate had just drank. ‘Come,’ continued Blacker, pouring out a glass and drinking it, ‘here’s success to you with the Widow Cottle.’

Preston drank another glass, and left the rumseller’s shop. He was now in high spirits, and felt very much like talking large to the rich widow. Fired as his brain was with Blacker’s liquor, still he had a most contemptible opinion of the man, and looked upon him as a miserable devil.

‘What! I saw wood for that low-bred, selfish rumseller!’ said Preston to himself, as he went up the alley towards the house of Mrs. Cottle. ‘I, who could once buy him and all his establishment! No, no; Richard Preston has not come to that yet. Perhaps Mrs. Cottle may open her miserly heart, and hand over a few dollars. If she does, I will pay Blacker the few cents I owe him, and let some poor devil of an Irishman saw his wood; and if she does not, I’ll not saw his wood. I cannot humble myself so much as to do a job like that for this three-cent rumseller. My daughter, Louise, earn me money in the way this infernal Blacker suggested! Confound his soul! if he hints such a thing to me again, I shall be tempted to break his thick scull, or spill the blood of his corrupt heart!’

Thus communed this poor inebriate, within his own thoughts, now that the fumes of Blacker’s liquor were in his brain, and the cries of his stomach were somewhat quieted; but when the raging thirst returns upon him, and his nerves begin to tremble, he will then sing another song, and, it may be, gladly consent to saw a rumseller’s wood, or do still more menial acts for the sake of a glass of the poison. His hand was now upon the knocker of Mrs. Cottle’s door. A thousand thoughts rushed through his mind. At one moment he felt as if he could rob

this miserly, unfeeling woman, in case she refused to open her heart and bestow her charity upon her suffering sister. At another, his conscience waked up and chid him for such a thought. He pulled the knocker, and Mrs. Cottle came to the door. Gazing upon him a moment, and averting her face as if she smelt the fumes of alcohol mingled in his breath, she said, in a cold, forbidding manner, 'Why are you here at this time of night? It is nearly my usual hour of retiring, and I do not wish to be disturbed.'

'Ah, Mrs. Cottle, I have something of importance to communicate to you,' replied Preston, looking into her face as if something were struggling in his heart to be delivered. He assumed this look and manner for the express purpose of exciting her curiosity, and to prevent her from refusing admittance and audience. He knew her so well, that he feared that she might, at the first onset, unceremoniously turn him away from the door, before he gained entrance.

'Well, what is the important matter you have to communicate?' she inquired, still standing in the doorway, and seeming to design to prevent his ingress.

'It is a story that cannot be told in a minute,' he replied. 'I must have time to relate it. I think you will be much interested, if your heart is like other women's.'

She was so much excited by the tones of his voice and his peculiar manner, that she invited him into the house. He went in and took a seat.

'Mrs. Cottle,' said he, in a very solemn manner, 'your sister is a very sick woman.'

'Well, I've been sick myself,' she replied, with a coldness that almost froze the heart of the drunkard. 'It is the common lot of humanity. All must be sick, and all must die.'

'True, Mrs. Cottle; but then persons when they are sick need many little things, to make them as comfortable as possible,' replied Preston. 'Your sister has not these necessaries.'

'She might have had them, if you had behaved yourself as a good husband ought,' she replied, while her lip curled in scorn, and her small black eyes sparkled with avarice.

'But she's in a suffering condition now,' he replied, in a tremulous voice. 'When one knows her sister is in distress, she will not stop to inquire into the cause of that distress, but will fly to her relief. I

think my wife will never recover from her present sickness. Could you not contribute a little something from your abundance to render her passage to the grave as comfortable as possible?’

‘Your daughter, Louise, was here a few days ago, begging, with tears in her eyes; but whether they were affected or not, I can’t say,’ said this unfeeling woman. ‘But I could n’t see my way clear to give her anything.’

‘Perhaps if you should visit your sister, you might ascertain whether my daughter’s tears came from her heart or were manufactured for the occasion,’ he answered. ‘You might, too, see your way clear to give a small pittance to your sister, to relieve her present distresses.’

‘Suppose you should try to shed a tear or two?’ she asked. ‘They would be about as availing as your daughter’s were. No, no, Richard Preston. When people bring poverty upon themselves by their own foolish conduct, they must suffer the consequences. It is no concern of mine. Is this the important matter you had to communicate to me? If so, you can be finding your way back to your sick wife just as soon as you please.’

‘Is it not important to be told that your sister is very sick and very poor?’ he asked, rising from his seat and slowly walking the room. ‘Have you no feelings for your only sister? Will nothing touch your sympathy? Has the love of gold made your heart callous, and turned it to stone? Is there not one chord in it which can be made to vibrate to a sister’s sickness, poverty, and distress?’

‘A drunken husband cannot affect me, however strong his appeals may be,’ she answered. ‘You have spent a handsome little interest and swallowed it down your throat. And now, forsooth, you come to me for assistance. You have come to the wrong place. You and your daughter, too, may go to some person who do’nt know you so well as I do. Perhaps you might cry, and induce some generous hearted and ignorant woman to give you something, but I cannot bestow anything upon you. It is no charity to give to a drunkard.’

‘But we have nothing in the house for breakfast,’ he said. ‘Can you be so cruel as to turn me empty away, when you have an abundance? It is your only sister that calls upon you in this her hour of distress. And will you refuse to minister to her wants when you have the means to alleviate her distress?’

‘I have already told you that the petitions of a drunkard I cannot

regard,' she replied, with a cold indifference which stirred his anger within his breast. But he had the caution to conceal his feelings and appear calm and collected, for he yet hoped he might wring from her a small sum, if no more.

'But my wife sent me,' he replied. 'She told me to come and plead with you, and try to open your heart.'

'She told her daughter to come, I suppose; but of what avail was it?' she inquired. 'Can you hope to succeed in your prayers, when your daughter could not? Go home, Richard Preston, and in the morning go to work, and earn something for yourself and family.'

'But we have nothing for breakfast,' he answered. 'And you would not have me go to a day's labor without something in my stomach, would you?'

'You'll have a dram in it, I'll be bound,' she replied.

'Will you give me enough to purchase a breakfast?' he asked, imploringly.

'I can give you nothing,' she replied. 'I wish you would go, and permit me to retire. It is now my usual bedtime, and I do not wish to be longer disturbed. It is of no use for you to talk to me any more, and so you may save your breath until you can use it to some purpose.'

'Will you not give me a trifle?' he asked, fastening his eyes upon her as if he would look her through.

'Not anything, and so you can walk out the same way you came in,' she answered. 'I do n't wish to hear any more words from you. You have destroyed your own reputation, wasted your property and that of your wife also. All gone down your throat in the shape of glasses of rum. Go and leave me, for I can this moment smell the fumes of alcohol. I should n't wonder if you stopped at Mr. Blacker's grocery as you came along, and spent your last cent for liquor, or got trusted for some.'

'And is your sister to be blamed for this, admitting it to be as you say?' he asked. 'She is now in distress and needs your assistance.'

'You're all in fault together,' she replied. 'Your wife has winked at your transgressions, and now she must abide the consequences.'

'But, Mrs. Cottle, hear me!' he earnestly replied. 'My wife has not winked at my indulgences. Often has she remonstrated and pleaded with me to refrain from drinking, but the cries of my stomach have proved louder than her voice. I would not heed her prayers and entreaties. And is she to suffer for my sins when you have the power to relieve, in some good degree, her sufferings?'

'I have heard enough about sufferings for one evening, and wish not to hear anything more,' she coldly answered.

'Then you will not give your sister anything, will you?' he inquired.

'You have had my answer before, and why torment me thus with questions?' she said.

'Then, hard-hearted woman, hear me and tremble!' he exclaimed, confronting her, and stamping his right foot upon the floor. 'If you will not bestow any charity upon your sister, give her what of right belongs to her. You have more than one thousand dollars of my wife's money in your coffers. Yield up that, and she will not ask you for charity. You have cheated her, and God knows it, and you know it, and the devil knows it, and smiles at the wicked deed.'

'What mean you by such language, Richard Preston!' she exclaimed, rising and walking across the room in great agitation. 'The same old story revived again. I've heard enough of that in years past. Let me hear no more.'

'Yes, the same old story revived, heartless, dishonest woman as thou art,' he replied, turning his eyes upon her in a burning, withering gaze. 'The same story will be told you in another world, unless you deliver up what belongs to my wife by every principle of justice. More than two thousand dollars her father left her, but she never got but one thousand, and you know it. You, being the oldest and promising her to take care of it, have indeed taken such care of it that she has lost it forever. Do n't deny this, miserly woman, for you know it is true.'

'In years past I have been told enough of this,' she replied, in an angry voice.

'Yes, and for years to come you shall be told of it, if God spares me the power of speech,' he answered.

'Rum will take away your powers of speaking before many months, unless you stop drinking,' she replied.

'I plead guilty to the charge of drinking too much, and would to Heaven you were as willing to confess your sins as I am,' he said.

'False, deceitful, dishonest woman, I charge thee to thy face with stealing from your only sister. Tremble! for the day of retribution is at hand! When you are brought as low as my wife, upon the bed of sickness, and have no hope of recovery, then you will wish you had done justice to your sister, for she will meet you beyond the grave and accuse you face to face. She will not need proof there, to convict you

of stealing from her, for your crimes will all be revealed and your guilty soul will be exposed.'

'Richard Preston! will you leave my house!' she exclaimed, grinding her teeth and clenching her skinny, withered hands, in rage.

'I will leave it and its miserable occupant,' he replied. 'But remember, God is just and will punish the wicked. Your riches may yet take wings and fly away. Richer folks than you have come to want, and felt the pinching hand of poverty. Repent while there is yet space for you. Pay over to your sister what justly belongs to her, and smooth her passage to the tomb, whither I fear she must shortly go.'

'Will you leave my house!' she again exclaimed, in a coarse, cracked voice.

'I will leave, lest my anger should prompt me to lay violent hands upon you,' he replied, turning a look of contempt and anger upon her, and going out.

Mrs. Cottle was several years older than her sister, Preston's wife. When her father died, Mrs. Preston was not more than ten or twelve years old. Their father's estate, after the debts were paid, amounted to nearly five thousand dollars. They had one brother, who was older than Mrs. Preston and younger than Mrs. Cottle. He died about a year after his father's death. Their mother died before their father. Over two thousand dollars of the estate belonged to Preston's wife, but she never received half of it. Placing confidence in her elder sister, and living with her up to the time of her marriage with Preston, she suffered her money to remain in Mrs. Cottle's hands, believing she would honestly pay it over whenever called for. After her marriage with Preston she called for her part of her father's estate, but to her surprise was paid short of one half of it. The remainder she had never been able to wring from the miserly grasp of her sister. Mrs. Cottle's husband had been dead several years. Having died without issue, he willed his property to his wife. This, together with what she received from her father's estate, and what she cheated her sister out of, made her a very handsome fortune, amounting in the neighborhood of ten thousand dollars. She lived in an obscure part of the city of New York. At the time our story commences, she was nearly sixty years of age, of a spare form, and a countenance wrinkled and ugly, expressive of nothing but avarice and a love of money. But for her sordid, selfish soul, she might have been a very decent-looking woman, but avarice and a corrupt heart made her countenance disagreeable.

CHAPTER II.

'By ceaseless action all that is subsists.
Constant rotation of the unwearied wheel
That Nature rides upon, maintains her health,
Her beauty, her fertility. She dreads
An instant's pause, and lives but while she moves.'



RICHARD PRESTON occupied a hired house at a cheap rent, in an unfashionable part of the city, nearly a mile from Mrs. Cottle's residence. He had lived in a better tenement once; but he had become so much reduced by his intemperate habits, that he was obliged to remove where rents were lower, and to occupy a very mean house in a poverty-struck neighborhood. Three years before our story commences, he lived in very respectable style, and even

owned a piano-forte, upon which his daughter, Louise, played with considerable skill for one of her age. She was a young lady of surpassing beauty, both in face and form. At this time, she was sixteen years of age. Her mother had paid great attention to her education, and given her all the advantages her limited means would permit. She had kept her at school until the last year; but her health failing, and their property gone, she was compelled to keep her at home to wait upon her and a drunken husband. Louise never complained, but waited and tended upon her mother with cheerfulness. Even when the sheriff came and took away their piano-forte, she never shed a tear before her father or mother, but endeavored to cheer up their spirits and make them happy. True, the good girl did weep in secret over the loss of her favorite instrument; but she shed more bitter tears over the intemperate habits of her unfortunate father.

Like her mother, she had dark eyes and very dark brown hair. Her complexion was a brunette, but not very dark, and her forehead was not high and bold, but beautifully formed, with good intellectual developments. Her form was light and very symmetrical; her natural motions quick but graceful, and her hands most exquisitely formed. Her powers of mind were quite above mediocrity, her perception quick, and her wit naturally keen. She was a fine scholar, having improved her opportunities for study to a greater degree than most young ladies of her age. Her father was very proud of her; and although he often came home much intoxicated, yet he never gave her a cross word, but was kind and tender. He loved her as he did his own life, and would do anything she requested him to do, except abandon his habits of inebriation. These were so fastened upon him, that no earthly power, apparently, could shake them off. Often when Louise was conversing with him, in his more sober moments, upon the subject of temperance, he would resolve to forsake his cups and become a sober man; but the grogeries scattered through the city would tempt him, and destroy his previously formed resolutions. He had evidently lost his power over himself, and could not control his raging appetite for strong drink. This grew more and more evident every day. Louise hoped that the sickness of her mother would somewhat restrain him in his downward course; but in this she was destined to sad disappointment, for it seemed to her that he indulged more since her mother had been unwell than before.

‘It seems to me, Louise, your father has been gone a great while,’ said Mrs. Preston, as she was sitting up in the bed, leaning against some pillows for support. ‘It is now nearly ten o’clock. I am afraid he’s in some place where liquor is sold.’

‘It is time for him to be back,’ said Louise, giving her mother a cup of herb tea to wet her parched tongue and lips. ‘I have my fears also; but, mother, we must hope for the best, and not borrow trouble.’

‘I hope sister Cottle will have feeling enough to send me a small sum,’ said the mother. ‘But I must confess I have very serious fears about it. The last time I saw her, she seemed to be entirely callous and insensible.’

‘Ah, mother, Aunt Cottle grows more and more selfish every day she lives,’ said Louise. ‘She has got to be a real miser, and even deprives herself of every luxury, and of some of the necessities of life.’

The last time I visited her, I tried every art in my power to touch a chord of sympathy in her heart; but I might as well have appealed to the paving-stones in the street as to her, with any hope of success; for I could get nothing from her, only that father was a drunkard. O, she is a dreadful woman! I had rather be as poor and sick as you are, than possess all her wealth with such a heart as hers beating in my bosom. I fear she will come to some untimely end unless she abandons her sordid and miserly feelings. She seems to have but one thought, and that is upon her money. Was she always so selfish and miserly?’

‘Not so much as she is now; but when she was quite a young girl, father said she loved money more than any of the rest of the family,’ replied her mother. ‘When she refused, soon after I was married, to pay me my money, I then began to tremble lest her love of money might corrupt her heart and make her dishonest.’

‘Well might you tremble, mother!’ said this good girl. ‘I regret to say it, but my own conviction is, that she is a wicked woman, and will one day be more unhappy than we are now with nothing in the house for breakfast.’

‘O, Louise, do n’t speak of breakfast!’ said her mother, in a tremulous voice. ‘I was thinking, just now, what you and your father would do for breakfast. I have no appetite, and shall want none.’

‘Do n’t make yourself uneasy on that account,’ said Louise. ‘If you can have a good night’s rest, it is all I ask. I can get something for breakfast in the morning. Perhaps father will bring home something.’

‘You must not place too much reliance upon that,’ said her mother. ‘He has disappointed us so many times, that I have done expecting much from him. If he has a cent of money, he will spend it for rum. If sister Cottle should open her heart and give him a dollar, he would get drunk out of it before coming home.’

‘Well, well, mother, do n’t let us borrow trouble, but make the best of everything,’ replied Louise. ‘I have the same fears you have, but then I do not intend to let them trouble me unnecessarily. Perhaps father may come home sober, with money in his pocket. There may be a limit to his course, and that limit he may have reached. He told me to-day that he would try and not drink any more. When he went away he had not drank anything since quite early in the morning, and perhaps he will come home sober.’

‘I will not endeavor to darken your prospects, or make things really

worse than they are,' said her mother, while a tear stole down her pallid cheek, and fell upon her emaciated hand.

Louise saw the precious drop tremble in her mother's eye ere it fell upon her hand. She turned away her head to conceal a tear which started in her own eye; for she did not wish to have her mother see her weep, lest it might add poignancy to her grief. Cautious and careful as Louise was, yet her watchful mother knew that emotions of grief were swelling her heart; but she said nothing. Both were silent for some moments, but sad thoughts were agitating their minds. Louise was quite as much alarmed about her father as her mother was, but she concealed her fears, lest they might disquiet her.

'Hark!' whispered the sick woman, whose sense of hearing seemed to be rendered more acute by the disease under which she was suffering.

'What do you hear, mother?' asked Louise, listening very intently.

'I thought I heard your father's step,' replied the mother. 'Yes, it is he; he has just come to the door. O, I hope he has been fortunate this time. There, he opens the door and he's not drunk.'

Well did this woman know by the manner in which he opened the door, whether her husband was drunk or sober. He entered the room a sober man, for he had not drank anything since he left Walter Blacker's rum hole. Mrs. Preston was glad to see her husband come home sober, but yet there was a drawback upon this pleasure, for she believed his sobriety furnished good evidence that his errand to her sister had been a fruitless one. In this supposition she was right, as the reader already knows.

'I'm glad you've come, father,' said Louise. 'We began to be anxious about you.'

'Yes, Louise, I've come just as empty as I went away,' he replied.

'Would not sister Cottle give you anything?' inquired the wife, in a feeble voice.

'Call not such a woman sister,' said Preston, biting his lips and snapping his eyes. 'She's no sister of yours, wife. Not one cent could I wring from her miserly grasp. She's a hard-hearted, selfish, dishonest woman. Never again will I ask charity of her. No, I would starve first.'

'What will you and Louise do for breakfast in the morning?' asked the wife.

Preston placed his hand upon his forehead as if painful thoughts were crowding his brain, but made no reply. The tears flowed freely down the emaciated cheeks of his wife, and sighs escaped from her agitated bosom. She was the very picture of sorrow and of suffering. Preston himself could not refrain from shedding tears. Louise saw the distress and agitation of her parents, but she made strong efforts to conceal her own feelings, and well did she succeed.

‘Do not weep, mother,’ said Louise, in a soothing voice. ‘I can get something for breakfast, and father can earn money to-morrow, in the forenoon, to buy a dinner with.’

‘Earn money to-morrow,’ repeated Preston over to himself. ‘Yes, saw wood for a rumseller, to pay for his miserable liquor! O, God! I wish I could break the power of this appetite which rages in my stomach! Must I humble myself so much as to saw wood for such a mean, contemptible man?’

‘Why, father, do you look so agitated?’ continued Louise. ‘You can get a job to-morrow, can you not? You’re sober to-night, and may heaven help you to keep so to-morrow!’

‘Dear Louise, I will try,’ he replied, in a voice which showed how deeply his soul was agitated. Your aunt’s cold manner and shrivelled face are now before me. In imagination, I can see her black eyes flashing with the fires of hell. The spirit of revenge is burning in my bosom and seeks to be gratified.’

‘Let not such thoughts occupy your mind,’ said the wife. ‘There is a power that will punish her according to her deserts, but that power belongs not to you.’

‘No, no, father, seek not for revenge,’ said Louise in an earnest manner. ‘She will have her reward. Keep sober, father, and we shall not need her assistance. We can yet be happy, if you will but keep away from the grog shops. I think you will. I feel more encouraged to-night than I have before for months. O, if you should not drink any more, how happy we should all be.’

‘I will try, Louise,’ he replied, resolving he would never taste another drop. ‘I will retire now. You may wake me up at one o’clock, and I will take care of your mother during the remainder of the night, so that you may get some sleep.’

According to this arrangement the night was passed. Morning came, and Louise awoke from her slumbers bright and beautiful. She

indulged the hope that her father would keep sober, and this hope thrilled her heart with joy. She had a single shilling piece, and with it she purchased materials for a frugal breakfast. After the morning repast was over, Preston thought he would go and see about sawing the rumseller's wood. Soon after he was gone, a well dressed, genteel looking lady, about forty-five years of age, came along, and seeing Louise at the door she stopped and spoke to her. She was attracted by the beauty of Louise, for she thought she had never seen a more beautiful girl in the city.

'Good morning, young woman,' said the lady, in a kind voice.

Louise returned the salutation very kindly, and seemed to the lady to be much pleased that she had noticed her. The lady wished for a further acquaintance with such a lovely and beautiful girl as Louise appeared to be, especially as there were evident marks of poverty about the dwelling. She had a curiosity to learn more of the history of Louise.

'Do you reside here?' continued the lady, gazing very intently upon Louise, and apparently manifesting much interest in her behalf.

'I do, madam,' replied Louise. 'I live here with my parents. My mother is very sick, and we are very poor.'

'Indeed!' said the lady. 'I'm very sorry to hear that your mother is sick. Will you permit me to see her a few minutes?'

'O, certainly, madam,' replied Louise. 'Mother will be glad to see you. Nobody calls upon us now. It was not so once. Do walk in and see my mother, for she's very feeble.'

Louise now led the way and the stranger lady followed. Mrs. Preston was in bed and very feeble, as her daughter had stated. The lady went to the bedside, and looking very kindly upon the sick woman, said, 'I perceive, madam, you're very unwell.'

'I am, indeed,' replied Mrs. Preston. 'I've been confined to my bed two or three weeks. I never expect to be any better.'

'Perhaps you will,' replied the lady, very soothingly. 'Have you things comfortable? I see you're not apparently rich.'

'We are, indeed, poor, but we were not always so,' answered Mrs. Preston. 'My husband is a very kind man, but his appetite for strong drink leads him astray and makes us very poor. If he would quit his cups we might be in comfortable circumstances, but poverty is now staring us in the face. I do n't care so much about myself, for I shall

soon pass from all earthly scenes; but what will become of my daughter? This thought troubles me more than all the pains occasioned by the disease I'm suffering under.'

'It is indeed hard to leave a daughter so young and so beautiful, but you must hope for the best,' said the lady. 'The same Being who protects us will protect her.'

'O, mother, do n't be alarmed on my account,' said Louise. 'I shall do well enough, for you have instructed me in the principles of virtue, from which I trust I shall never stray.'

'The best legacy a mother can leave a child,' said the lady. 'It is much better than wealth, for money is soon gone, but virtue always remains and will guide you happily through the world.'

'O, dear madam, you speak kindly, and your words encourage my heart,' said the sick woman, reaching out her skeleton hand, and looking up imploringly into the face of the lady. Shaking the lady's hand, cordially, she continued, 'to whom am I indebted for this friendly visit, and this manifestation of kindness?'

'My name is Constantia Comer,' she replied. 'I'm a widow and childless. My husband died three years ago, leaving me in comfortable circumstances, but not rich. I have a little, however, for the sick and the distressed, which I freely give. I believe you are a worthy object of charity. I know how to sympathize with you. My husband was a drunkard, and died of delirium tremens. Had he lived until this time, he would have left me poor and penniless like yourself; but he drank so freely for a few weeks previous to his death, that his nerves became shattered, and he sank under that terrible disease which the drunkard only knows. Like your husband, he was kind, but he had no power to control the lion appetite which seized upon his stomach.'

'Indeed you can sympathize with mother,' said Louise, while a tear stood in her dark, lustrous eye, and her lips trembled. 'But Heaven be praised, that you were not left poor and destitute.'

'True, Heaven ought to be praised,' said the lady. 'If I had been left poor and destitute, I should not have had the pleasure of contributing my mite for the relief and comfort of your mother this morning. Here, good child, take this and spend it as you may need.'

And the stranger lady handed Louise a five dollar gold piece, while a smile of benevolence played over the countenance of the fair donor.

'A thousand thanks for your kindness and generosity,' said Louise,

courtesying very gracefully, and receiving the precious gift into her beautifully-shaped hand. 'I'm afraid you've given us more than we deserve.'

'O, no,' said the lady, pressing the grateful girl's hand, and smiling kindly upon her, 'I rejoice to be able to give so much. I will call again in a day or two. You must not suffer for the necessaries of life in this great and rich city.'

'You're very kind, and may Heaven reward you,' said the sick woman. 'O, Mrs. Comer, it seems to me as if you were sent here this morning by an unseen power to minister to our wants. I feel as if I could not thank you enough. My daughter will bless you, for she had spent her last shilling for breakfast this morning. Accept our most heartfelt thanks.'

'You're entirely welcome to what I have given,' said the lady. I dare say I'm as happy in giving as you can be in receiving. I hope the next time I see you I shall find you better.'

The stranger lady now shook the sick woman cordially by the hand, kissed Louise, and left this humble dwelling of poverty and misery.

'O, what a good woman that is,' said Louise. 'I love her, she is so kind and benevolent. She will come here again, I have no doubt. This money will go a good ways in purchasing provisions.'

'She is an angel of a woman,' said the mother. 'Her visit has really made me feel better than I have for several days. But, Louise, I shall not get well. Disease has so fastened itself upon my constitution that no human power or medical skill can again raise me up. This kind woman may become a mother to you after I'm gone. O, how fortunate that she happened to come along this morning. The hand of a kind Providence is in it, and let our hearts be grateful.'

'I do n't think it is best to let father know this lady has given us any money, for he may importune me for some of it,' said Louise.

'I would not, replied her mother. 'That's well thought of, for if he knew you had money, his appetite would rage so that he would strive to get some of it to gratify his thirst. It will be best to say nothing about it.'

We must now leave the sick woman and her lovely daughter, and follow the father. After breakfast he proceeded immediately to Blacker's rummery, but before he engaged in sawing the wood he took a good horn of Blacker's poison. While he was sawing, a gentleman

came along who knew him in his better days. Since he had become a drunkard, and lost his property and reputation, he was usually called 'Dick,' and sometimes 'drunken Dick.' Stepping close to his side, the gentleman accosted him and said, 'well, Dick, you've got a job this morning, I perceive; but I suppose you are working for a dead horse.' Dick stopped his saw, and looking his friend in the face, very earnestly replied, 'not entirely for a dead horse, but faith, it comes so near it that it's not worth while to dispute about it. I've drank up a portion of what I'm earning, and shall be dry enough when I finish the job to drink up the rest of it.'

'Ah, hard indeed is it to work for such poor pay,' said the gentleman. 'To saw a miserable rumseller's wood is bad enough in all conscience, but to be obliged to drink his nasty liquor is still worse. At any rate, it would be for me.'

'You're right, my good friend,' said Preston. 'It is a bad business all round, but there are so many little devils in my stomach, that I'm obliged to stop their cries with such liquor as I can get.'

'Yes, and the more you feed them with his poison, the louder will be their cries,' replied the gentleman. 'It is of no use, Dick, the more you drink the drier you'll be.'

'True as the Bible,' said Dick. 'I know and feel its truth, but what shall I do? I owe this Blacker for a few glasses and must pay him. I've no money. My daughter spent for breakfast the only shilling she had in the world, and where she got that God only knows.'

'How much do you owe this miserable tumbler-washer?' asked the gentleman.

'Not over a shilling,' replied the poor inebriate. 'And here's four feet of wood which I have just began to saw.' Blacker pays me no money, but I'm to take it all in liquor.'

'O, shame!' said the gentleman. 'Let him saw his wood himself. Here's a dollar you may have, if you will promise me upon your honor as a man—upon that honor which you once possessed—that you will not saw this rumseller's wood, but pay him out of the dollar what you owe him, and with the remainder purchase some food to carry home to your family. What say you, Dick, to this proposal?'

'Say,' repeated Dick, while his eyes brightened with joy and his heart beat high, 'I promise you I will do it upon my honor, however loud the little devils in my stomach may cry for more of Blacker's liquor.'

'Here, then, take it,' said the gentleman, handing him a silver dollar, and passing on.

'This is indeed a godsend,' said Preston to himself. 'I will keep my promise and do precisely as the generous giver requested me. Yes, let Blacker saw his wood himself. I will now go into his shop and pay him. I should like one more drink before I go. But no! Richard Preston will keep his promise this time.'

He now went into the store to pay the rumseller, who saw the man pay Preston some money, but he heard none of the conversation.

'Come, Blacker, I'm fortunate this morning, and will pay you for those glasses,' said Preston. 'I owe you for five, that will be fifteen cents, and here's your money.'

'But are you not going to saw the wood according to your promise?' asked Blacker.

'No. I prefer to pay you the money now,' replied Preston, swelling up quite important.

'I suppose that man who just passed paid you some, did he?' inquired Blacker. 'What did he say? He's a cold water man, I believe. I think he speaks in temperance meetings.'

'O, he did n't say much,' replied Preston. 'He gave me a dollar, and told me to pay you and buy some provisions for my family, and by heavens, I'll do it.'

'He's a mean man, or he would n't interfere with my business,' said the rumseller, taking the dollar and giving back to Preston the change. 'Come, Dick, you'll want a little of the *O be joyful* to carry home with you. I'll lend you a bottle. Perhaps your sick wife will want some to rub her face and hands with.'

'No, no, Blacker,' said Preston. 'My wife can't endure the smell of it, either sick or well. Nothing she hates so bad. And your liquor don't send out a very sweet perfume, that's a fact, except to him whose stomach is all burnt up with the poison, as mine is sometimes.'

He now went to a provision store and expended the remainder of the dollar in food, and carried it home to his family. And cheerfully did his wife and daughter greet him.

CHAPTER III.

'What tribes of beauteous flowers,
And plants how new and vivid!
How desolate shall I
Soon make these verdant scenes of plant and flower.'

ANDREINI.



WEEK passed, and Mrs. Preston continued to grow worse. Several times during that period, her husband had come home drunk, notwithstanding the hope of his reformation that she and her daughter indulged on his return from sawing Walter Blacker's wood. Mrs. Constantia Comer had twice visited the sick woman, gave her another five dollar gold piece, and expressed a great interest in her daughter. Louise herself be-

came very much attached to this benevolent widow, and looked up to her as if she were her own mother. The money she furnished them supplied them with comfortable food, and rendered their circumstances comparatively easy. Mrs. Preston could not feel thankful enough for her kindness and attention to her wants and necessities. She and Louise had frequently conversed upon the subject of the latter's going to live with this good widow, but they had not yet named the affair to her.

'It has now been two days since Mrs. Comer has visited us,' said Mrs. Preston, in a feeble voice, to her daughter. 'I fear I shall not live long, — perhaps not three days. I wish we had said something to that good woman, when she was last here, about your living with her. I think she would be willing to have you live with her, or find you a good place.'

'I wish we had named the subject to her,' said Louise. 'I know of no person I should rather live with than with her, after you are taken away. She will come again, perhaps, and then you can talk with her about it. How different she is from Aunt Cottle. That woman has

not been to see you since you've been sick. Mrs. Comer acts much more like a sister than she does.'

'True, Louise; Mrs. Cottle acts very strangely, and I fear will come to some bad end,' replied her mother, while the tears ran down her wan and wrinkled cheeks, at the thought of the hard-heartedness of her only sister.

'Father hates her dreadfully; and I almost fear he may do her some injury when liquor has partially deprived him of his senses,' said Louise.

'I know he has a revengeful spirit towards her, but he does not seem to have such feelings towards any other person,' said her mother. 'How long has he been gone out? Is it not near night?'

'Yes, the sun has just set,' replied Louise. 'Father went out about half an hour ago. He told me not to be alarmed about him, if he did not return until in the evening.'

'O, I fear he will come home drunk again,' said Mrs. Preston. 'I did hope I should never see him intoxicated again, the short time I have to live with him. Hark! I hear some one coming! It is not your father's step. I believe it is Mrs. Comer's. I hope it is. I want to see that good woman once more before I die.'

A knocking was now heard at the door, and Louise conducted Mrs. Comer in. When she met her at the door, Mrs. Comer embraced and kissed her very affectionately.

'How is your mother this evening?' anxiously inquired Mrs. Comer.

'O, she's no better, but grows weaker every day,' whispered Louise, in a voice her mother could not hear. 'Walk in; she will be delighted to see you.'

Mrs. Comer now entered the sick room, and soon had Mrs. Preston by the hand. The sick woman was so overcome by her own emotions, that she could not speak. But her tears spoke more eloquently than any words human tongue could utter.

'Do not be so much agitated, Mrs. Preston,' said Mrs. Comer, in accents of kindness and love. 'You're very weak and feeble, I know, but your troubles will soon be over. A good woman need not fear to die.'

'I'm not afraid to die,' sobbed Mrs. Preston. 'These tears do not flow from a fear of death; but your love and kindness have overwhelmed me. I only wish to live that I may have an opportunity to repay you for these acts of disinterested benevolence. My daughter may live to do it. I hope she will.'

‘O, Mrs. Preston, do not give yourself any trouble on my account,’ said Mrs. Comer, wiping off the large drops of perspiration which stood on the patient’s brow, and smoothing back her hair with her hand; ‘I’m amply repaid for all I have done. If I have been instrumental in smoothing your pillow, and ministering to your wants, it is all I ask.’

‘You have indeed made my pillow quite easy, and saved my daughter a world of trouble,’ said Mrs. Preston. ‘What will become of Louise after I am gone, is more than I can tell. If her father would abandon his intemperate habits and become a steady man she could live happily with him, but I fear he will end his days, like your husband, with delirium tremens, and then Louise would be without any one to protect her in this great city of wickedness and temptation.’

‘O, mother, perhaps Mrs. Comer will give me advice and direction,’ said Louise.

‘Yes, my good girl, I will do all I can for your good,’ replied Mrs. Comer.

‘Perhaps you could find her a place,’ said the mother. ‘I wish she could live with some woman as good as you are, and then I should die happy.’

‘She may live with me if she pleases,’ said Mrs. Comer. ‘If she likes me well enough, I should be delighted to give her a home under my roof until she could find a better place.’

Mrs. Preston’s tears burst out afresh, and her heart beat with new emotions. Mrs. Comer could hardly interpret these tears, still she thought Mrs. Preston was pleased with her proposition.

‘O, Mrs. Comer, you can’t think how happy your words make me feel,’ said the sick woman. ‘My daughter and I were just speaking about her living with you as you knocked at the door. Surely there’s a good Providence in all this. If you will take Louise, I will give her to you, for I’m sure you would be a mother to her. She will be a good girl, and try to repay you for all your acts of kindness to me.’

‘But perhaps your daughter may feel objections to my proposal,’ said Mrs. Comer.

‘O, no indeed, Madam, I do not,’ replied Louise. ‘I had rather live with you than with anybody I ever saw.’

‘Perhaps your father would oppose it,’ said Mrs. Comer.

‘No, he would not,’ replied Mrs. Preston. ‘I know he would rejoice

at it, for I talked with him yesterday upon the subject, and he appeared to be much pleased.'

'Then I shall be most happy to receive your daughter, Mrs. Preston, and will endeavor to do as well by her as I would if she were my own child. The first time I saw her, in the door-way, I felt an interest in her, such as I never felt for any other young lady.'

'O, mother, I'm so glad that I have found a friend in whom I can trust!' said Louise. 'And you will be happy too.'

'Yes, dear child. I can now die in peace,' said Mrs. Preston, in a very tremulous and feeble voice. 'O, Mrs. Cramer, you shall have my dying prayers for the choicest of heaven's blessings to rest upon you.'

Mrs. Preston was now quite exhausted, and could not speak so as to be understood, and yet she continued to mutter her thanks to the kind woman who had taken such a deep interest in her and her daughter. The kind widow now took her leave of mother and daughter, but not, however, before she had slipped into Louise's hand a two dollar note. She promised to call again the next day, for she was fearful Mrs. Preston could not continue but a day or two. The physician had given her up to die, saying her disease had gone beyond the power of medicine.

We must now ask the reader to go with us to another scene, leaving the mother and daughter to the enjoyment of their own reflections, and go to the house of Mrs. Cottle. It was just before the hour when this miserly, cold-hearted woman retired; she was sitting in her meanly furnished parlor, and reflecting upon the loss of a hundred dollars she had sustained that day. Not more than three hours ago, she was informed that the person to whom she had loaned a hundred dollars, with most exorbitant interest, had failed. This made her feel very uneasy, and much troubled in spirit.

'I'll never trust another man so long as I live,' she said to herself. 'There's no such thing as knowing who to trust in these days. This Mr. Hutchins, to whom I loaned this money, was thought to be not only good but quite rich. I have some money now on hand which I calculated to loan to-morrow, having received an offer through a broker, but I will keep it locked up before I'll let any living man have it. Let me see, how much have I now in bills? I must go to the banks and get the specie for it, as they will fail next. I will do it to-morrow. I will count it before I retire.'

And she rose and went to her desk and took out a small trunk, containing what bills she had on the city banks. She put the trunk on the table, opened it and took out three rolls of bank bills very nicely and carefully done up. She counted over the money and found it amounted to a trifle over six hundred dollars. Just as she had finished counting it, she heard a knocking at the door. Hurrying the money into the trunk again and closing the lid, but not locking it, she went to the door, and as soon as she opened it, a man rushed in and put his hand tightly over her mouth, to prevent her screams from being heard, if she attempted to make any, as he had reason to suppose she would. And she did make an effort to scream, but he held her mouth so tight that her voice could not be heard in the street.

‘I will take my hand from your mouth if you will promise me not to give any alarm,’ said the man, in a hoarse, unmusical voice, which chilled the blood in her veins. ‘But if you do make the least noise I’ll instantly shoot you through the heart with the loaded pistol I have in my hand. I have come prepared to take some of your money or your life.’

She struggled for a moment to clear herself from his grasp, but he pressed her so tight that she found it exceedingly difficult to breathe. During this time, the ruffian was pushing her back into the room from which she had just come. After reaching the parlor, the light shone upon his face and she saw that he was a black man. She trembled for her life, while he still held her by the mouth and almost stopped her breathing.

‘Will you promise to keep silent, or shall I choke you to death upon the spot?’ he continued, pressing her mouth and throat still harder, and greatly alarming her. ‘Answer me, for the death of the miser will be a hard one. I came here not to trifle, and your money or your life I must have.’

After some time had elapsed, and being oppressed for the want of breath, she signified by her motions that she would remain silent. He then released her from his iron grasp, but still held a pistol pointed at her breast, and threatened to shoot her instantly if she attempted to give any alarm. The frightened woman seized her trunk with a miser’s grasp.

‘Ah, that contains the treasure,’ said the black man; ‘you may let that trunk remain on the table, or feel the contents of this pistol in

your heart. I'm resolute and determined. You have cheated your poor sister out of a thousand dollars, as I understand.'

'Who told you so?' she inquired, in a trembling voice, placing the little trunk upon the table and casting a miser's look upon it.

'It is a common report about the city,' he replied, taking up the trunk and opening it. 'Ah, here it is now. Is there as much here as you stole from your sister?'

'I never stole from my sister,' she replied, reaching out her trembling hand towards the trunk. 'It's a lie that drunken Preston has told you.'

'That drunken Preston, as you call him, never told me anything about it,' he answered, 'but you know it is true. Come, how much is there in the trunk? Tell me and that will save me the trouble of counting it. Is there one thousand dollars? That's the sum I want, if you've got so much about your premises. Tell me truly, or your corrupt blood shall stain your old carpet.'

'O, you will not be so cruel as to rob me of all that's in the trunk!' she exclaimed. 'There are six hundred and three dollars in the trunk, if you will go away I will give you some of it.'

'How much will you give me?' he inquired. 'Come, open wide your old flinty heart and make a generous offer.'

'A man has failed to-day who owes me a hundred dollars,' she replied, 'I shall lose every cent of that. Do have mercy upon me.'

'I care not for your loss of a hundred dollars,' he coldly answered. 'Your sister has lost ten times that amount by your fraud and rascality. What will you give me? name it, for I've no time to lose.'

'I will give you twenty dollars,' she replied.'

'Twenty dollars!' he repeated, while a smile of scorn and contempt passed over his ebony features. 'Twenty dollars! I meant how much you would give me besides what is in the trunk. I shall take this of course. I must have more than six hundred dollars. You have, I presume, some silver and gold in your desk there. Old misers like you generally have some of that kind of money by them.'

'Oh dear, you will ruin me!' she exclaimed, clasping her hands, and rolling her eyes upwards. 'You're dreadfully cruel and hard-hearted.'

'Not so cruel and hard-hearted as you have been towards your sister,' he said. 'Do n't turn your eyes upward, for you can get no

help from that quarter. Turn your eyes downward, and call upon the devil, your master, for help, if you think you can get any. Come, just go to the desk and count out a few hundred more, and I'll be off.'

'O, do have mercy on a poor, lone woman,' she said, most imploringly.

'Keep me here not much longer, or I'll silence your tongue forever,' he replied, raising the pistol to her breast and flashing his eyes upon her. 'I've told you I must have a thousand dollars, and I will have it if the amount is in your house.'

And he started towards the desk from which she took the trunk before the black robber knocked at her door. She took hold of his coat to keep him back from going to her desk, but the muzzle of his pistol close at her face made her release her hold. He opened the desk and there he found another trunk, larger than the one which contained the bills. Lifting it up he found it quite heavy, and on shaking it he heard the rattling of silver or gold.

'Ah! this will do,' he continued, I like the music gold and silver makes. It is nearly as sweet to my ears as to yours. Is there more than four hundred dollars in this?'

'O, do let that remain in the desk!' she said. 'There are not more than three hundred dollars in it.'

'Well, this and the paper money, together with what you lost to-day by the man who failed, will amount to about the sum you stole from your sister,' he said. 'I shall take this and bid you a good evening. If I hear you give an alarm after I'm gone out, I will return immediately, and shoot you dead upon your floor. Remember what I say, for I shall execute my threats, if I knew I should be hung for it at the rising of to-morrow's sun.'

The black burglar now left the house, carrying with him both trunks and their contents. She dared not give the alarm immediately, lest the ruffian might return and execute his threats.

The robber passed off, out of reach of the watchmen, before the unfortunate woman dared to give any alarm. Nearly ten minutes elapsed before Mrs. Cottle ventured to give the alarm that she had been robbed. And when she did do it, she cried out most vociferously, and soon brought together several watchmen and a large concourse of men and boys. But it was unavailing, for the robber escaped, and eluded the search set on foot to ferret him out. The city was traversed in various directions, but no black robber could be found, for he had

concealed himself most safely. Mrs. Cottle was in great agony, but those who were best acquainted with her sympathized with her the least. But few had any pity for her. That day she lost over one thousand dollars which nearly upset her reason and made her a maniac. No sleep visited her eyelids that night. A watchman tarried with her until morning, for fears were entertained that she might take her own life.

It was now nearly midnight, and Dick Preston had not returned home. Louise and her mother were somewhat alarmed at his long absence.

'I fear some accident has happened to your father,' said Mrs. Preston. 'It is now nearly midnight, and still he is away.'

'He told me not to be alarmed on his account,' said Louise. 'The most I fear is, that he will come home intoxicated. There is no danger of his being robbed, for he has nothing to attract the notice of a robber.'

'I know it, but then he may get into some fight in the Bowery, or in some of the grog holes about the city,' replied the mother. 'I'm in constant fear that he will come home not only intoxicated, but wounded in some of those affrays which often occur in the vicinity of the rum shops.'

'Well, mother, you're too feeble to talk to-night,' said Louise. 'You felt so well when Mrs. Comer left us, that I indulged the hope you would get a little rest, but I fear you will have a bad night of it if you do not dismiss your fears about father.'

'There! I hear his footsteps,' said the wife. 'I hope he is not intoxicated, for then he can watch with me, and you can get some sleep.'

Preston now entered the room, but he was not so much excited by liquor as his wife anticipated. He had been drinking rather freely, but exercise in walking, or something else, had carried off the fumes of the alcohol, and he was decently sober.

'Why, father, how agitated you look,' said Louise. 'I should think you had been fighting or engaged at a fire. Your hair is quite wet, and your face very dirty and sweaty.'

'I have been engaged in a little bit of a scrape about Walter Blacker's rum shop,' he said, going to the glass and examining his face, to see if it was so dirty as his daughter represented it to be. 'Well, my face is rather dirty, I washed me as I came along, after our spree, but not very thoroughly I perceive.'

'Your ears are all smutty now,' said Louise. 'I should think you

had been dragged through a coal hole, or some worse place. Do go and wash you.'

'What fighting scrape have you been engaged in?' inquired his wife; 'I was fearful you would get into some trouble. Oh! I wish you would keep away from these rum holes.'

'Blacker's bottles have had a smashing this evening, I reckon,' he said.

'No matter if every bottle in his shop is broken into a thousand pieces, and the poison they contained poured into the street,' said Louise. 'I hope he will never be able to replace them.'

'They are all broken, and the fragments scattered over the pavements,' he said. 'For a short time there was a dreadful smell of bad liquor about there.'

'Who were engaged in the scrape with you?' inquired Louise.

'A lot of the Bowery boys,' he replied. 'We took two or three drinks round, out of the best, and then commenced the fun. I say we, but I did n't get there until the bottles began to crack merrily upon the pavements. Such a smashing you never heard, and such a smell of liquor never filled the air before.'

'I'm glad of it,' said Louise. 'I wish every drop of rum in the city was now running down the street.'

'If it were, there would be a good many noses in the gutter,' said he.

'Bring me some more of that balm tea,' said Mrs. Preston. 'I am very thirsty.' Louise gave her mother some tea. 'Now, Louise, you had better go to bed, and let your father sit up with me,' she continued. 'If I grow worse before morning, your father will call you.'

'Yes, Louise, you may retire,' he said. 'Your father is not so drunk to-night as he might be; and one thing is quite certain—he will never drink any more of Blacker's liquor.'

'I rejoice at that, father,' said Louise; 'and I should rejoice with still greater joy, if you would never drink any more liquor of any rum-seller. If there was such a mob as you speak of around Blacker's rum hole, Aunt Cottle must have been frightened; for her house is but a short distance from Blacker's shop.'

'If the rumors be true that I heard in the streets, a short time ago, your aunt was greatly frightened before the attack was made upon Blacker's liquor establishment,' said her father.

'Why, what rumors did you hear about Aunt?' inquired Louise.

'The report is that she's robbed of more than a thousand dollars,' he replied.

'Robbed of a thousand dollars!' repeated his wife, in a trembling voice.

'Yes; so the story goes in the street,' he replied. 'Several men are scouring the city in pursuit of the robber; but I hope he will escape.'

'Did n't you go and see Aunt?' asked Louise.

'What, after she was robbed? No, no; I did n't go near her,' he said. 'I went to see her once, at your mother's request, and I then said I would never go again to ask charity of her. I'm glad if she is robbed of a thousand dollars. That's just the amount she stole from your mother.'

'O, husband, you ought not to indulge such a revengeful spirit,' said his wife. 'I wish you would not. It makes me feel very unpleasantly. I know my sister has cheated me out of a good deal of money, for which I have suffered; but she will be punished for it one day or another.'

'Yes; and she begins to be punished already,' said her husband. 'The reward for her crimes may come along faster than she likes. The report is, that she is now almost crazy at the loss of her money. She may take it into her head to kill herself yet.'

'Why, father, how strangely you talk!' said Louise.

'Well, Louise, I may talk strangely, but I'm not intoxicated, am I?' he asked.

'No, father, you're not, Heaven be praised; but I do not love to hear you talk so about Aunt Cottle,' she replied.

'If the miserly old creature should conclude to hang herself, your mother would be the heir to all her property, provided she died without making a will,' he said.

'I never could wish for her death on that account,' she answered. 'Poor as we are, we have found one kind friend in Mrs. Comer. O, she's one of the best women in the world, and has said, this very evening, that I may go and live with her.'

'You may go, Louise,' he said. 'Now go to bed, for I shall call you very early in the morning, in order to take a nap myself.'

The good girl retired; and we leave the poor drunkard watching by the bedside of his wife, and kindly ministering to her wants.

CHAPTER IV.

'The way is long, my children, long and rough,
The moors are dreary, and the woods are dark;
But he that creeps from cradle on to grave,
Unskilled save in the velvet course of fortune,
Hath missed the discipline of noble hearts.'

OLD PLAY.



SAY, Clinton, there goes Dick Preston, or Drunken Dick, as the Bowery fellows sometimes call him,' remarked one young man to another, as they were passing in the Bowery. 'Henry Luroff says he has one of the most beautiful daughters to be found in the city.'

'Well, Luroff knows a handsome girl when he sees one, for he's the devil and all among the women,' said the other. 'He has already spent over ten thousand dollars of his father's money, and is in a fair way to spend as much more, unless the old man puts a check upon him. If he has got his eye upon Preston's daughter, she is a ruined girl. It is said he has seduced more girls from the country than any other young man in the city.'

'He has not been introduced to the young lady yet, but he expects to be soon after her mother dies,' said the first speaker.

'Is her mother sick?' inquired his companion.

'I understand so,' replied the other. 'She will probably live but a few days. Luroff has his plans all laid; and as soon as she pops off, the fair daughter is to be transferred to the young rascal's arms.'

'Henry must look out for the father; for, drunk or sober, he would take the life of any man who should attempt to injure his daughter.'

said the first. 'I hope some one will give him a hint, that he may be on the watch.'

'Well, you are acquainted with him, and why do n't you exercise that kind office?' inquired the other. 'Let us overtake him, and just put the poor man on his guard.'

'Agreed!' replied his companion. 'I will do it, by heavens; for I do n't like that Henry Luroff. I heard you say, the other day, you meant to get a wife before many weeks, if you could find a handsome girl that would have you. How do you know but Dick's daughter may fill your eye? I have no doubt but she's a most lovely and beautiful girl.'

The person thus addressed was a young painter by the name of Thomas Clinton. He was a fine artist, and had acquired a good deal of fame in his profession during his residence in the city, having taken several portraits among the 'upper ten thousand.' As an accomplished artist he was highly esteemed; and what was still better, he was a young man of excellent moral principles. Being very handsome himself, and possessing a highly cultivated taste, he was a great admirer of female beauty, and thought much more of it than he did of rank or riches. His companion knew his peculiar taste, and hence he made the suggestion about Drunken Dick's daughter. The young man who addressed him was a clerk in a store in Broadway, and bore the name of Edgar Thompson. He was a particular friend and companion of the young painter. His father was rich, and lived out of the city. Young Thompson had been liberally educated, and was now placed in a large mercantile house, for the purpose of acquiring a mercantile education, — his father preferring this to his studying either of the learned professions. Having hurried their steps, they had now overtaken Preston. The poor inebriate had done some jobs at the store in which Edgar was clerk, and hence his acquaintance with him.

'How fare ye, Dick?' said Edgar, as he and his companion came up to Preston.

'Ah! is that you, Thompson?' replied Preston, turning round and seeing the young clerk. 'I'm glad to see you. Have you any more jobs for me in your store?'

'We have n't at present, but shall need your services one of these days,' replied the clerk.

'Good! I shall be on hand,' said Dick. 'Did you hear of the row last night?'

'No,' replied Thompson, 'what was it?'

'Some of the Bowery fellows made an assault upon Walter Blacker's decanters and broke them upon the paving stones, letting the liquor run down the sewers.'

'I'm glad of it,' said the young painter. 'The gutter is a more suitable place for such poison to run down than a man's throat.'

'Well, friend, I believe you're more than half right,' said Dick. 'Blacker kept confounded bad liquor, but still I have drank it when I could do no better. I'm a judge of good liquor, although I have swallowed so much poor in my life. I used to drink the good stuff once.'

'Were you there?' inquired Thompson. 'I suppose you would not break decanters and spill the liquor, would you, Dick?'

'Between you and me, I was there and smashed up a few junk bottles,' replied Dick, placing his thumb at the side of his red nose and looking archly. 'You'll say nothing about it, for Blacker is trying to hunt up the trespassers, and he would have me up before the Court if he knew I had a hand in the affray. Keep dark, Thompson.'

'If you should be hauled up, Dick, the Court would hardly believe you would lend a hand in breaking a rumseller's bottles,' said Thompson, smiling. 'Those who best know you would be more likely to believe you would drink the contents.'

'That's a fact, Thompson,' said Dick. 'I have a tremendous appetite, and heaven knows how glad I should be to get rid of it.'

'Break square off—turn a short corner, and in a few days your stomach will not cry for liquor,' said the painter.'

'Did you ever drink much, young man?' asked Dick, looking Clinton full in the face and admiring his fine manly countenance.

'I never have,' replied Clinton, 'and I trust I never shall.'

'Ah, then you know but little of the dreadful power of the drunkard's appetite,' said Dick. 'I know what it is by sad and painful experience.'

'I understand your wife is sick,' said Thompson.

'Yes, she's a very sick woman,' he replied, sorrowfully. 'She cannot live but a short time. She may die before night.'

'Indeed! I am very sorry to hear it,' said Thompson. 'You have one daughter, I believe; I think you have spoken of her to me in times past.'

'I have a daughter sixteen years old, and a good girl she is too,' said Dick, wiping a tear from his eye.

'Is she handsome?' inquired the young painter, feeling his sympathy excited by the tear which started into the bleared eye of the drunkard.

'Ah, I think she is very beautiful, but then a father's testimony in such a matter must be taken with some grains of allowance, as the lawyers say. Others might not judge her so handsome as I do.'

'Then if she is handsome and her mother dies, a double care will rest upon you,' said Clinton. 'The temptations are great in this city, and libertines are abroad by day and by night.'

'True, my young friend,' replied Dick; 'I understand something about these matters, for I've lived in this city several years. I have a watchful eye over my daughter. Her father's a drunkard, it is true, but then he keeps one eye open to guard and protect his daughter.'

'I rejoice to hear it,' replied Clinton, 'may you continue to do so. What will you do with her in case her mother dies?'

'O, she will go and live with a widow lady by the name of Comer,' he replied. 'She is an excellent woman, and, I believe, a Christian, if there's one in the world. She has often visited my wife during her sickness and given her money. God bless her! She gave Louise some money when we had nothing to buy a meal of victuals with. Twice has she given Louise a five dollar gold piece.'

'I'm glad you have found such a friend,' said Clinton.

'Ah, you can't rejoice more than my daughter does,' said Preston. 'It seems to me she loves this woman almost as much as she does her mother.'

'Do you know what street this widow lady resides in?' asked the young painter.

'I do not,' replied Preston. 'I do n't know as she ever told my wife. She says but little about herself. Ah, she's an angel of a woman! I wish the city was full of such.'

'Have you ever heard of a young man by the name of Henry Luroff?' inquired Thompson.

'What! old Luroff's son — the rich man who lives in — street!' said Preston.

'The same,' replied the young clerk. 'Do you know him?'

'I'm not personally acquainted with him,' answered Preston, 'but I understand he's a great spendthrift and a libertine.'

'You have understood correctly,' said Thompson. 'He acts in both those characters, and you must be watchful and have your eyes open, lest he become acquainted with your daughter.'

'Did he ever speak of her?' asked Preston, feeling his curiosity somewhat excited.

'I heard him say that you had a most beautiful daughter, and that he intended to make her acquaintance after her mother's decease.'

'I know not how he expects to become acquainted with her,' said Preston, thoughtfully. 'If he comes to the house I live in, he will meet the father instead of the daughter, which may not be so agreeable to him.'

'That's right, Dick,' said Thompson. 'Keep a bright eye upon him, and not let him ensnare your daughter, as he has many other innocent, beautiful girls.'

'Let me alone for that,' said Dick. 'If he gets round Richard Preston he's a shrewder fellow than I think he is. I know enough for any Luroff that ever walked Broadway.'

'Stick to that, Dick, and you and your daughter will do well enough,' said Thompson.

'If your daughter is really beautiful I should like to paint her picture,' said Clinton; 'I love to paint handsome faces.'

'She would be delighted to have her portrait painted,' replied Preston. 'Perhaps you may have an opportunity to do it one of these days.'

Their conversation was now interrupted by some news-boys who came along with some papers, shouting at the top of their voices, 'here's the papers, all about the horrible robbery committed last night! A nigger robbed a widow woman of a thousand dollars and almost murdered the woman?'

The young painter purchased one of the papers and read the account of the robbery which we have elsewhere recorded.

'What is the horrible robbery the boys are so clamorous about?' asked Thompson.

'It seems, according to the account, that a widow lady, by the name of Cottle, was robbed last night by a negro, and the woman is almost crazy about it,' replied the young painter; 'I hope they will catch the black scoundrel.'

'The widow Cottle, who was robbed, is a sister of my wife,' said Preston.

'A sister of your wife!' repeated Thompson. 'Why, she's reputed to be quite rich.'

'She is wealthy, and a miserly creature as ever breathed,' replied Preston. 'She has never been to see my wife since she became sick, and that's not the worst trait in her character, for she had more than a thousand dollars which her father left my wife, and has never paid it to her. Now she has lost that amount, and I am just wicked enough not to shed a single tear for her loss. I hope the black man will make good use of it.'

Preston now went home. He had crooked his elbow and took an oath within his own heart that he would not drink only a certain number of glasses a day while his wife lived. Thus far he observed and kept his oath. As he entered his humble dwelling, Louise met him, and said, 'Father, a truckman has been here since you have been absent and left us a barrel of flour, a large piece of beef, and a barrel of potatoes. I told the truckman he must have made a mistake, but he said he knew you, and that you paid him and told him to deliver the articles here. Did you buy them, father?'

'I certainly did, and ordered them to be delivered here,' he said. 'We shall not be hungry again very soon, I hope, my daughter.'

'How did you get them, father?' she asked. 'Who was so kind as to trust you? There—perhaps Mrs. Comer gave you the money to purchase them!'

'No, she did n't, and neither did I get trusted,' he replied; 'I bought them and paid the money for them.'

'What have you in that paper under your arm?' anxiously inquired Louise.

'Take it and see,' he replied, handing her the bundle.

'The anxious girl took the bundle and found within the paper a black silk dress. She unfolded the silk and looked at it with astonishment. She could not tell what to make of all this good fortune. She was speechless.'

'What have you got, Louise?' asked her mother, in a feeble but anxious voice, for Louise had told her about the flour and other articles.

'It is a silk dress, mother,' she replied. 'I do n't know whose it is.'

'It is yours, Louise,' replied her father. 'I have bought and paid for it.'

'What does all this mean?' inquired the astonished wife. 'How did you pay for all these articles? They must have cost a good deal.'

'I paid for them in the same manner as any one would who had

money in his pocket,' he replied. 'I handed over the silver and took these necessary articles in exchange. Louise needed a handsome dress, for it has been some time since she had one.'

'But where could you get so much money, father?' asked Louise, in much earnestness.

'You have found a good friend in the person of Mrs. Comer, and why may I not have found a friend as well as you?' he replied. 'Go to a dress-maker and have your gown made up, and ask no more questions. The silk is paid for.'

'O, father, I wish you would tell me who has been so kind as to give us money,' said the good girl, manifesting much impatience.

'No matter, Louise, the money was not spent for liquor, for I have sworn within my own heart not to drink but four times a day so long as your mother is sick,' he answered.

'And for this I rejoice, father, but should rejoice much more if you had sworn never to taste another drop of alcohol so long as you live,' said Louise.

'I dare not take such an oath at present, lest I might in an evil hour be tempted to break it,' he answered. 'Come, go to a dress-maker and get your gown made in good style. It's a nice pattern, and you will look well in it. I saw a young painter awhile ago, and he says he should like to paint your picture.'

'Did he ever see me?' she anxiously inquired. 'What is his name?'

'He never saw you, but somebody has told him that you are handsome,' he replied. 'His name I believe is Clinton, and a fine looking young man he is too.'

'O, I should delight to have my picture painted!' she said. 'It would look well in a black silk dress.'

'It would look well in any dress,' he answered. 'Perhaps he will paint your portrait one of these days; I will see the young painter again and talk with him about it.'

'How much would he ask?' she inquired. 'Perhaps Mrs. Comer would be willing to have it taken.'

'Young Clinton would take it for nothing, I think, from what he said,' replied her father. 'Come, I will stay with your mother while you go to the dress-maker's. You had better have your dress under way, for you may need it sooner than you expect.'

'Yes, Louise, go now; for my feelings admonish me that you will soon need a mourning dress,' said her mother, in a weak, tremulous voice.

Louise now repaired to a dress-maker. While on the way, she saw two young gentlemen on the pave, upon the opposite side of the street, looking at her very intently, and apparently making some remarks about her.

'By heavens! Edgar, there's a beautiful girl!' said Thomas Clinton. 'What a splendid form she has! and how gracefully she walks! There's no artificial mincing in her gait as we frequently see among the fashionable belles as they trip along Broadway. Every muscle in her system does its office, and what an easy motion about her hips, head, and shoulders! It is nature's own movement, free, easy, and untrammelled by any conventional rules; I have not seen such grace and beauty for many a day. There's a model for the statuary and the painter. Let us walk along in sight of her, I love to see such motions whether the form that makes them is in rags or ruffles.'

'You're always looking out for beauty of face, or the poetry of motion,' said Edgar Thompson. 'Out with your pencil, and take a sketch of her with the bundle under her arm as she moves along, and call her the "Belle of the Bowery." You might make a beautiful fancy piece to place in your *studio*.'

'I think I could, for her form and motions have really suggested some new ideas to me,' replied the young enthusiast. 'Ah, see! how gracefully she turned that corner! By heavens! let us follow her a few minutes longer. I can assure you, Edgar, that girl is a beautiful creature, so far as form and motions are concerned. I wish I could get one glimpse at her countenance.'

'If that should happen to be ugly, the charm would be broken, and you would be awakened from your blissful dreams,' replied his companion. 'You had better not attempt to look into her face, for she may have but one eye, pock-marked skin, blue lips, rotten teeth, and fiery red hair. No, no, Tom, do n't look into her face, for, as I heard an illiterate old doctor once say of his patient, the glimpse might cause a *revulsion of feeling*.'

'Pshaw! Edgar,' exclaimed the young painter, impatiently. 'Your remarks have already caused a revulsion of feeling. Nature has not made such a mistake as to join such a face as you have described to such a form as that girl has. I'll bet you a box of cigars that she has a beautiful face. Come, what say you? Do you take the bet?'

'I will,' replied Edgar. 'Now let us overtake and pass her. We can then see her face.'

They now hurried their steps, and were soon close behind her.

'See those feet and ankles!' whispered Clinton, nervously pressing the arm of his companion. 'That's what I call the true poetry of motion. See her shoulders, too! and her neck, and the motion of her head! all easy, graceful, and natural. Come, I'll double the bet that her face compares with her form and motions! See that dark ringlet as the breeze wontons with it and brushes it over her left shoulder! Don't you see how its silken curls shine in the sunbeams! That's what I call beautiful hair, the right shade precisely! How that would show in a picture! I could give it the same tint nature has!'

Louise was at that moment thinking about her new dress and what her father said about her having her portrait painted. She heard the young gentlemen talking in a low voice behind her, and thought she heard the word *picture* pronounced by one of them, but still she was by no means certain. At any rate, the thought induced her to look back. She did so, and met the gaze of the young artist and his companion. What with the exercise of walking, and the excitement occasioned by the thoughts of her new dress which she was going to have made, her cheeks were flushed with rose-tinted hues, and her dark eyes sparkled with uncommon brilliancy. All the ornaments in creation could not have added a single charm to her beauty as she appeared at that moment.

'By heavens!' thought the young artist, 'what radiant beauty beams from every lineament of her fair face! what heavenly light sparkles in her eyes. I knew nature had done her perfect work. Yes, her picture might well be called the *Belle of the Bowery*. I wish I could take it just as she looks now, even with the bundle under her arm and her neat but coarse attire.'

These thoughts ran rapidly through the young artist's enthusiastic brain, while he pressed the arm of Thompson very closely, as much as if he had said 'I've won the box of cigars.'

They now passed the young girl, who was wholly unconscious of the enthusiastic emotions which swelled the bosom of this accomplished and skilful painter. After they had passed her, first one looked back and then the other, and both feasted their eyes on her beauty.

'What say you now?' inquired Clinton. 'Didn't I tell you that Nature had made no mistake in the formation of that female. In her organization there's perfect symmetry throughout. How is it about the box of cigars, eh?'

'By heavens! you have won them handsomely,' replied Thompson,

again turning his head and looking back as if he were not yet satisfied with feasting upon the charms of her face. 'She is a most beautiful and bewitchingly lovely girl. There can be but one opinion upon that question. I should like to know where she makes her nest.' }

'So should I, for such a girl as she is ought to have a splendid cage,' said Clinton.

'Suppose we should keep sight of her, and mark the house she enters,' said Thompson. 'I should like to have you paint her picture.'

'I should like the picture well enough, but by heavens, I should prefer the original better,' said the artist. 'She hits my fancy precisely. She corresponds exactly with the image which my imagination has formed. Let us walk on ahead of her slowly, and let her pass us, and then we can follow her and see where she goes.'

While they were thus busily talking about this Belle of the Bowery, and recounting her charms, she slipped into a dress-maker's. Clinton looked back and exclaimed, in much earnestness, 'gracious! she's vanished! she's gone! How foolish we were not to keep our eyes upon her. She has probably turned into another street back of us. Let us go and see where the beautiful bird has flown.'

'We were foolish enough,' replied Thompson, regretting that he had lost sight of her, almost as much as his companion did. 'Why did n't you keep your eye upon her? I thought you would not let her pass from your view.'

'I saw her but a moment before I spoke,' replied Clinton.

'Perhaps she has wings upon her back and has ascended with them, and is now sailing among the clouds above us,' said Thompson, laughing.

The young artist involuntarily looked up towards the clouds, before he was aware of what he was doing. He suddenly turned his eyes upon the *pave* as if he were ashamed of the impulse which prompted him to gaze upon the heavens.

'Did you see her flying through the blue vault?' asked Thompson, bursting out into loud laughter.

'None of your jokes,' said Clinton, while a shade of sorrow passed over his countenance.

They now went back and hurried along the street they supposed she might have taken, but they saw not the beautiful girl who had made such an impression upon their hearts. She was lost to their sight, and the young artist feared she was lost forever.'

CHAPTER V.

'The torrent hastes not to the sea so rapid,
Nor yet so rapid in the realm of fire
Flashes kindle and die,
As the quick circling hours
Of good are joined to evil,
In life's corrupted state.'



'Y dear Louise, come here,' said her mother, in a very weak and trembling voice. 'A change has come over me since morning. It seems to me I shall live but a few hours. My heart flutters strangely, and I feel as if I were sinking into the grave; but, dear child, I am not afraid to die. Put your hand upon my side, and feel how feebly my heart beats.'

Louise placed her hand upon her mother's side, as she requested, and felt the fluttering pulsations of her heart.

'There! do n't you feel it?' continued the good woman. 'I know quite a change has come over me. But a short time longer will you hear your mother's voice. Soon I shall sleep in the cold grave, and worms will devour my body. O, my child, my only child! my lungs are feeble, and my power of speaking has almost left me, never to return again in this world. What can I say to you, that will do you the most good! My words must be few, and may God help me to choose them. Soon you will be left alone with a father who has almost destroyed himself by intemperance. True, he drinks moderately now; but when the earth hides me from his sight, I fear me he will drink worse than ever, and will become totally incapable of giving you advice and direction. You will go and live with Mrs. Comer. No doubt she will guard and protect you; but you are young and beautiful. Sometimes I almost wish Nature had bestowed upon you less personal charms; for your beauty may prove a snare to you in this wicked city, where there are thousands of temptations to lead the young, the thoughtless, the inno-

cent, and the beautiful, astray from the paths of virtue and peace. O, Louise, guard yourself against the wiles and seductions of the young men who inhabit this city! Be watchful, lest your too susceptible heart lead you from virtue and innocence. For many years I have watched over you with all a mother's care. I have seen you grow up into womanhood with unspeakable pleasure, but yet with fear and trembling. I know the temptations which will surround you. Many young men, attracted by your beauty, will whisper tales of love into your ears; but, Louise, beware how you listen to their syren songs. The serpent, when he wishes to charm the poor bird, assumes all the most beautiful hues he can, and his eyes sparkle with unwonted brilliancy. Beware of the libertine! Remember my last words of admonition, *beware of the libertine!* for there is moral death in his touch.'

The good mother pressed the hand of her daughter, and remained silent, apparently much exhausted by her efforts in speaking. Louise saw that she failed very fast, and was anxious for her father's return. She expected Mrs. Comer to call, as she had promised her a visit that afternoon.

'Mother, I will remember your last words, and treasure them in my heart,' said Louise, while the tears started from her eyes and ran down her cheeks.

'Remember, too, your father,' continued the mother, in a still more feeble voice. 'Drunkard as he is, still he is your father. Do him all the good you can, and let him not suffer if you can avoid it. He is a man of strong impulses, and of but little self-control; yet he has a kind heart. He loves you, and would almost lay down his life for your happiness.'

'O, mother, I will try to prevail on him not to drink any more than he does now,' said Louise, wiping the big drops of sweat that glistened on her brow.

'I wish I could hear how your Aunt Cottle is,' said the mother. 'Her love of money was so strong, and became such a passion with her, that I fear her loss will seriously affect her mind; but we must hope for better things. If she dies without a will, all her property will fall to you, as legal heir. O, my child, if such should be the dispensation of Heaven, make such use of the money that you will not be afraid to die.'

'Father said he would go and see how her mind was,' replied Louise. 'He will be back soon. I heard, yesterday, that she was very sad and gloomy.'

'Do you know, Louise, who gave your father the money he has recently been possessed of?' asked her mother. 'I wish I knew who has been so kind and generous.'

'I do not,' she replied. 'I have never been able to find out anything about it. It has always been a great mystery to me.'

'Well, perhaps he will tell you one of these days,' said the mother. 'I hope — I — there — I'm too weak to talk now. Turn me on my right side.'

While Louise was changing the position of her mother, her father entered the room, followed by the dress-maker with Louise's silk gown. She paid the dress-maker, and told her she would try it on at some other time, as her mother was too sick for her to do it then. As the dress-maker went out, Mrs. Comer came in, and hastened to the bedside of the sick woman.

'Your mother is not so well this afternoon, I fear,' said Mrs. Comer, placing her hand on the patient's forehead, and gazing into her haggard countenance and sunken eyes.

'She has failed very fast within two or three hours,' replied Louise.

The mother reached out her skeleton hand, and Mrs. Comer took hold of it. She was evidently making an effort to speak, but at that moment was too feeble to give utterance to her thoughts. At last she whispered, 'husband.' Preston came trembling up to the bed, and gazed with violent emotions upon his dying wife. All was still, save the wife's hard breathing, and the beatings of the hearts of those who stood around the bed:

Making a great effort, the poor woman said, in a whisper, 'Have you heard from sister Cottle?'

'I have,' replied the husband. 'She's very sad and gloomy; scarcely speaking to any one. I have just come from her house. She said but very little to me, and appeared as if she was afraid I came to ask alms of her; but I soon set her heart at rest upon that point. She is receiving in this world some of the punishment due to her miserly thoughts and selfish feelings. Ah, wife, she is much more to be pitied than you are.'

The sick woman now turned away her head, and sank into a kind of lethargy. All watched her pallid countenance, and listened to her breathings. She laid in this state several minutes, scarcely moving a muscle, except those employed in respiration. At length she turned

back her head and gazed upon the silent group. Fastening her eyes on Louise, and moving her lips as if she was trying to give utterance to some thought, she reached out her trembling hand. Louise seized it, and imprinted a kiss upon those lips which had now lost the power of speech. A smile passed over the mother's face; and while it passed, she ceased to breathe. Her pure spirit had flown to a brighter and a better world.

'She is dead!' said Mrs. Comer, grasping the hand of Louise, and pressing it very affectionately. 'Your mother, dear girl, is dead; but she smiles even in death. Her struggles are now over; and the unuttered prayer that was on her lips is heard in heaven. It was for you.'

'O, that she could have lived longer with father and me!' exclaimed Louise. 'But you will be a mother to me. The thought that you would guard and protect me, smoothed her passage to the other world, and made her dying moments comparatively happy.'

'Yes, Louise, you shall live with me,' replied Mrs. Comer. 'I trust there are many bright and happy days in store for you. Mothers, however dear they may be, must die.' Then turning to the weeping father, she continued, 'wives too, however much they may be loved by their husbands, must die and leave them, and husbands must also leave their wives — we all must die!'

We now draw the curtain over this melancholy scene, and turn to other incidents in our narrative. No person had yet been found who committed the robbery upon Mrs. Cottle. Her friends advised her to offer a reward for the arrest and conviction of the thief, but she would not consent to run the risk of losing a single cent for any such purpose. The trunks which contained the money were found not far from Blacker's rum shop by one of the crowd engaged in the assault upon the rumseller's decanters on the evening of the robbery. Conjecture was rife, and suspicion strong, that Blacker himself was at the bottom of the dark deed, but yet there was not proof enough to warrant his arrest. Many supposed that he hired a large negro man who lived in the same alley, to commit the robbery, but the colored gentleman stoutly denied having anything to do with the transaction. Mrs. Cottle represented the robber as a "stout nigger man," and hence suspicion fell on this negro. His premises were searched, but without success. Nothing but the two small trunks were found, and these were picked up near Blacker's groggery. Mrs. Cottle grew more and more gloomy

every day after her loss. She was not inclined to converse with any one and signified her wish that she desired to be left alone. Fears were entertained that she would become a maniac. She said inquiries enough about her loss had been made, and she wished to hear no more of them. She seemed to think all her property was gone when not a tithe of it had been stolen. This idea became riveted in her brain, and no logic she was mistress of could reason it away. The impression became strong upon her that she should inevitably come to want. Stronger and stronger this impression grew the more she reflected upon the subject. She became so much alarmed that she would not allow herself but one meal during twenty-four hours. In less than one week after the depredation was committed, she lost nearly twenty pounds of flesh and looked more like a skeleton than a living mortal. She was always very thin and spare, but now she had the appearance of an Egyptian mummy. Her neighbors and acquaintances became alarmed about her, but she absolutely refused any assistance. It seemed to her that every person who visited her came to rob her of what she had left. She looked with suspicion upon even her best friends. In fact she believed she never had any friends. Being herself possessed of the demon of avarice, and having no feelings of sympathy for any human being, she thought everybody else was just like herself, incapable of friendship or affection for any being. Even the cat, that went mewing about her house, she would never feed. And if the poor creature was not lucky in catching mice, she had to suffer the pangs of hunger.

The negro, upon whom suspicion fell as the robber of this miserly woman's money, was in great trouble. It was the first time in his life that ever slander or suspicion sullied his fair fame. This report had such an effect upon his nerves and peace of mind that he was determined to go and see Mrs. Cottle. Conscious of his own innocence and purity of character so far as this dark transaction was concerned, he took a gentleman with him, whose reputation for honesty and uprightness was unquestionable, and went to see Mrs. Cottle some three or four days after the robbery was committed.

When they entered the room Mrs. Cottle started back and screamed, as if she feared a second robbery was about to be committed upon her. Deacon Goodhue, that being the gentleman's name who accompanied the suspected negro, soothed her nerves and told her they had come on a friendly visit, and not for any evil purposes. She knew the worthy

deacon well, and had as much confidence in him as she had in any human being. By the influence of the deacon she soon recovered from her fright, and listened to what they had to say.

'Mrs. Cottle,' said the deacon, 'we have come to see if the black man who robbed you a few evenings ago resembles Johnson here. He says he is innocent, although rumor has been rife that he is the robber. He comes now and presents himself before you, and wishes you to give your opinion whether he resembles the black man who stole your money or not.'

Mrs. Cottle adjusted her spectacles upon her nose, stuck out her chin and examined the negro from head to foot. Johnson stood up like a hero before her prying gaze, and never flinched a hair. Conscious of his own innocence, he feared not to confront Mrs. Cottle, or any other woman. He stood erect like an innocent man.

'Do I look like de nigger man what robbed ye, Misses Cottle?' asked Johnson. 'I'm a innocent as de little child what is not born. Dis nigger's heart is not black, Misses Cottle. I never stole a cent in all my life. I get my living by de sweat of de brow. Deacon Goodhue here knows me from a child.'

'It is true, Mrs. Cottle, that I have known Johnson ever since he was a small boy, and I never knew aught against his moral character,' said the deacon. 'Does his voice sound like the man's who robbed you?'

'I was so much frightened that I can hardly tell how the nigger did look,' replied Mrs. Cottle. 'O, Deacon Goodhue, he held a pistol at my breast and threatened to shoot me through the heart if I attempted to give the alarm. Here, in this room, I stood and trembled to see the black robber carry off my money. O, I'm a ruined woman! I shall come to want! I never shall see my money again!'

'You've enough left to maintain you handsomely,' said the deacon. 'Yes, the interest of it is amply sufficient. You have no cause for alarm. But to the matter in hand, I'm always a man that comes directly to a point, Mrs. Cottle. Johnson has asked you if the sound of his voice resembles that of the negro that robbed you. Will you have the goodness to answer his question?'

The good deacon was as square as a brick. He was a man, as he said, that comes at once to the point in issue.

'Let me hear him speak again,' said Mrs. Cottle. 'Let him say, as

the robber did, "if you give the alarm I'll shoot you through the heart; your money or your life; I must have one thousand dollars;" speak this over and I will listen.'

'Well, Johnson, repeat over what she has requested,' said the deacon. 'It's a very good way of getting at the similitude of the voices.'

'I will speak it over, but I shant mean what I say,' innocently replied Johnson.

'Certainly not,' answered the deacon. 'It is only to try your voice.'

The negro now repeated the words as Mrs. Cottle dictated, but he did it with a tremulous voice, quite unlike that a robber would be likely to use. Mrs. Cottle suddenly started when he began to repeat the words, not, however, from any similarity in the negro's voice to that of him who robbed her, but from the recollection of the terrible scene which those words awakened. Johnson was alarmed when he saw her start so suddenly, for he feared she might express an opinion adverse to, or inconsistent with, his innocence. The deacon had the same fears when he saw her movements.

'Well, Mrs. Cottle, what is your opinion?' asked the deacon.

Mrs. Cottle again peered at the trembling negro through her glasses, and examined him as minutely as a slaveholder would who was about to purchase him as a slave. Johnson thought her examination was painfully long, notwithstanding he was perfectly conscious of his own innocence.

'It seems to me that the black man who robbed me was not so large as this one,' said Mrs. Cottle. 'O, how I tremble when I think of that robber! How he strained his eyes and pointed his pistol at me! I never shall recover from that shock.'

'Well, Misses Cottle, does my voice sound like his?' inquired Johnson, feeling quite pleased with what she had said.

'O, no! yours is not near so cross and dreadful as that robber's was,' she replied.

'There! Deacon, did n't I tell you dis nigger was innocent as de child what nebber see de light ob de sun in de heavens,' said Johnson, grinning a happy smile, and strutting across the room quite proudly.

'You did, Johnson, and I always believed you,' replied the deacon. 'Now, Mrs. Cottle, you must bear up under your afflictions with

Christian fortitude and resignation. Misfortunes happen to us all. It is a world of sorrows and a vale of tears.'

After giving this advice and consolation to the disconsolate widow, the deacon, followed by the negro, took his leave. Johnson, as he left the room, bowed very politely and thanked Mrs. Cottle most heartily for confirming his innocence. The deacon's advice did not avail anything with this miserly woman. She believed this world was one of sorrows and felt as if she lived in a vale of tears. Her mind was evidently diseased. A kind of monomania had seized upon her, and she thought starvation would be her fate. This single thought began to occupy her mind to the exclusion of all others. She dreamed that famine had spread over the land. She saw one after another fall around her whose deaths were caused by starvation. Such dreams flitted through her brain for three or four nights in succession, and her thoughts by day were confined almost exclusively to the same subject. In less than two weeks from the time the robbery was committed, she was found hanging by a bed-cord from a beam in her wood-house. She was dead and cold. It was thought by those who first discovered the body, that it must have been hanging there from one to two days at least. A jury of inquest was called, and the verdict was that she committed suicide by reason of insanity. Thus terminated the life of a woman who worshipped no other god but that of gold. She died without a will, and left something over ten thousand dollars. Her death did not happen until nearly a week after the burial of her sister, Mrs. Preston.

Louise, on the same day of the funeral of her mother, went to the house of Mrs. Comer, where she was received with the greatest kindness and attention. Mrs. Comer resided in a very genteel house situated in the Bowery. It was built of brick, very well finished, and contained several rooms. The apartment which Louise occupied was a front chamber which looked into the street, and commanded a very good prospect. It was well furnished. The fair occupant was highly pleased with her establishment, and but for the death of her mother, and the fear that her father would drink worse than ever, she would have been quite happy. Mrs. Comer was all kindness and attention. Louise had lost one mother, but she felt as if she had found another. Her father broke up housekeeping and went to a boarding house. The first night she spent at her new home passed without the occurrence of anything

worthy of record. There were four young ladies who took tea with her at the same table. Mrs. Comer sat at the head of the table and Louise had her seat next to her. The ladies were very fashionably dressed, but conversed but very little while at supper. Louise asked Mrs. Comer who the ladies were, and she told her they were her boarders. She was much gratified with the idea of having female friends with whom she could associate at her new residence. She awoke in the morning with new prospects and new hopes. During the night she had reflected much upon the death of her mother. She thought it was a happy death, and believed her mother was enjoying the society of angels. These reflections had a tendency to reconcile her to the loss of her mother, and to make her comparatively blithe and cheerful. Besides, Mrs. Comer was so kind and motherly that she was almost gay. The next day she and Mrs. Comer were sitting in the parlor late in the afternoon, conversing upon the death of her mother and upon a variety of topics, when one of the female boarders entered. She was a girl about twenty years of age and quite handsome, but her beauty was far below that of Louise. She was, however, the handsomest of all Mrs. Comer's boarders. Louise noticed the evening before that a piano-forte stood in the room, but she said nothing about it, nor did she intimate that she had any knowledge of the instrument. Mrs. Comer thought, of course, that she could not play, and therefore never thought of asking her.

'Come, Catherine, give us a little music,' said Mrs. Comer, addressing the young lady who had just come in. Perhaps our new boarder would like to hear you.' Then turning to Louise, she continued, 'you have often heard music of the piano-forte, I presume. And do you like it?'

'O, yes, I have heard it played a few times and am very fond of the music,' replied Louise. 'I think it makes very sweet music.'

'It does, and perhaps Catherine will give you some lessons,' replied Mrs. Comer. 'She plays pretty well, considering the time she has been engaged in it.'

'O, I should be very willing to learn Miss Preston,' said Catherine, seating herself at the instrument and playing over a dancing tune she had learnt principally by rote.

She played it through several times and then played a march. Louise could n't help laughing in her sleeve to see the flourishes the

young lady made, and how nicely she felt while playing. She was a very ordinary performer, and knew but a little about the instrument. Louise debated in her own mind whether to display her skill at that time or not. There were great inducements for her to do it. Knowing she could play a thousand times better than Catherine, and being anxious to surprise and please Mrs. Comer, she finally concluded she would play. After Catherine had played her two tunes over several times, she invited Louise to sit down at the instrument and she would show her how to strike the keys. Louise hesitated.

‘Yes, Louise, sit down, and Catherine will show you,’ said Mrs. Comer.

Louise took a seat on the stool, and spread her fingers upon the keys. Catherine stood beside her, and placed her fingers upon the notes of the dancing tune she first played.

‘Well, how shall I go?’ asked Louise, smiling. ‘You play first.’

‘Here, let me show you,’ replied Catherine, playing over two or three of the first bars. ‘There, play that over first. Perhaps you had better play with one hand until you become a little familiar with the keys.’

‘No, no. You play the tune through, and let me see how your fingers go over the whole,’ said Louise, assuming an anxious look.

‘Well, I will,’ said Catherine. ‘But you must learn a little at a time. It will take you several days to learn such a quick tune as this. It is called “The Campbells are coming.” I think it’s a very pretty, lively tune.’

She now played the tune over twice, and displayed her utmost skill, for she felt proud of her musical accomplishments, and took delight in showing herself off before Louise. Mrs. Comer sat watching the movements of the girls.

Louise now commenced, but made a confused piece of work of it. Catherine laughed, and told her to go slower, and placed her hands where she began.

‘I’ll get it now,’ said Louise, removing her fingers and placing them on some other keys. ‘I like another key the best to play this tune. I think it sounds sweeter.’

Catherine laughed heartily, but she soon changed her laugh for a look of surprise and astonishment; for Louise played the tune over twice in elegant style, giving clear and distinct touches to every note. Mrs. Comer, as well as the young lady, was speechless with astonishment.

Louise then played the march that Catherine played, and touched it most sweetly. Mrs. Comer and her boarder were still silent, listening to the sweet strains which the drunkard's daughter called forth from the instrument.

'I do n't like these tunes so well as I do this waltz, they are so old-fashioned,' said Louise, smiling, and commencing a most beautiful waltz, which she played with much taste and skill.

Catherine rose, and immediately left the room. Mrs. Comer burst out into a fit of laughter, and complimented her protege very highly. Louise was happy in her new home.

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‘What makes you mention his name?’ inquired Miss Constantia Bruce,—we write her true name now, and, for the present, discard her assumed one.

‘O, he told me, a few days ago, that an angel would soon appear here; and I conclude this Louise must be the angel he referred to,’ replied Catherine.

‘Perhaps so,’ laconically replied the mistress of this establishment. ‘You will be careful, Kate, to have but little conversation with this girl. Do not reveal to her, by accident or otherwise, my real name. I have succeeded thus far admirably well. She’s a pure-hearted girl as ever breathed, and supposes me to be a philanthropist and a Christian. To let her suddenly know the true character of my house, would shock her nerves, and perhaps drive her from it. She’s not only beautiful, but cunning and shrewd. There’s a good deal in her, when properly developed. She must be led along gradually. I shall be obliged to make her unlearn many lessons of virtue I have taught her, besides making vice familiar to her by gentle degrees.’

‘Then you have thus far appeared as a saint to her, have you?’ inquired Kate, smiling.

‘I guess you would think so, if you had heard me talk to her and her dying mother,’ answered Miss Bruce. ‘I was obliged to assume such a character, or I could never have got her willing to come to my house.’

‘Where is her father?’ asked Kate. ‘Being a drunkard, I suppose you found no difficulty with him; or would not, even if you had revealed to him your object.’

‘Not so, Kate,’ replied this hypocritical woman. ‘Although her father is a drunkard, yet he would even now raise the devil among us, if he thought for a moment that Louise was brought to my house for any other than virtuous purposes. He’s a man of pride and spirit. I fear his influence even now; but I hope he will take to his cups still more than he has. I’m inclined to think he will, now his wife is dead, for he has a terrible thirst for liquor. Keep dark, Kate, and I will manage the beautiful Louise. Now do n’t let your envy of my lovely protegee betray you, and lead you astray. You know you have no reason to complain, for I have done well by you.’

‘True, you have; but I have brought you in a good deal of money for the last six months,’ said Kate.

'You have indeed,' replied the mistress. 'We have both done well. You are one of my best girls. I must now go and see Louise, for I expect Henry Luroff here this forenoon.'

Miss Bruce now went into the parlor, where sat Louise, leaving Catherine Seymore to her own reflections. This girl, less than a year ago, was a virtuous female; but through the arts and intrigues of the mistress of this establishment, she had been led astray, and was now a wanton. She was not plunged so deep in depravity, that she did not occasionally feel a pang dart across her heart at the loss of her virtue and good name. Naturally proud and ambitious, she always wished to be first wherever she was placed. For the last year she had been the belle of this house, to say the least of her; but now she feared a rival in the person of Louise Preston. The thought struck her, that Louise might have virtue enough to resist the temptations which surrounded her. She really hoped she would; but then this hope did not arise from any other than selfish motives. Louise, she feared, was in her way; and if she could not be seduced, then she would still maintain her ascendancy. The more she reflected upon this matter, the more anxious she felt that Louise might still remain a virtuous girl; for if she did, and Miss Bruce found that she could not be seduced by the arts of Luroff, or any other power, she would be obliged to leave. She even went so far in her feelings, that she was determined to use her influence to save the new boarder from the degradation into which she had herself fallen, if she could do so without being detected by the wily, artful mistress.

'I have just had a hearty laugh with Catherine about her instructing you to play upon the piano last evening,' said Miss Bruce, as she entered the room where Louise was sitting. 'She felt quite angry with me at first, because I suffered the joke to go so far; but I told her I knew nothing about your musical skill or acquirements. Why have n't you told me before that you could play?'

'I did n't think of it. I have had so much else to occupy my thoughts,' replied Louise.

'Well, you managed the affair very adroitly, and made the most of it,' said Miss Bruce, smiling. 'I do n't know when I have been so much pleased. I laughed quite heartily to myself after I went to bed last night. Catherine was really provoked; but she will soon get over it, for she is a good-hearted girl. She may be willing to take lessons of

you yet, after all her proud display last evening. She has learned very fast, considering the time she has been practising.'

'O, she would make a good player if she would begin right,' said Louise. 'Her fingering is very bad. She plays principally by rote, I should think.'

'She does, I believe,' replied Miss Bruce. 'A young gentleman paid a quarter's tuition for her; but she missed more than half her lessons.'

'She's engaged, then; is she?' asked Louise. 'Who is the young gentleman that was so generous towards her? I suppose she expects to be married; does she not?'

'O, no; I think there is no engagement between her and the young gentleman,' replied Miss Bruce. 'He was attentive to her awhile, but he is not in love with her. He is a splendid young man, and his father is one of the richest men in the city. Kate would be glad to catch him if she could; but then she has not quite charms enough, although she's a very pretty girl. Do n't you think she is?'

'She is very pretty indeed, and seems to be very lively and animated,' answered Louise. 'What is the young gentleman's name?—he is very handsome, you say.'

'Very handsome indeed,' replied this artful woman. 'He's considered the finest match in the city, being rich, respectable, and handsome. His name is Henry Luroff. The young lady that catches him will get a prize worth having. There are hundreds of girls in the higher and more fashionable circles, who would be glad to have him; but he's determined to marry the most beautiful lady to be found, if he marries at all. If he should set eyes on you, Louise, I do n't know what would be the consequence.'

'I suppose the consequence would be, that he would turn them away from me,' replied Louise.

'No, no, my good girl; perhaps not,' said Miss Bruce, winking very slyly, and smiling most pleasantly. 'I should n't be surprised a bit if he should fall in love with you.'

'I do n't think there's much danger of that, there are so many more beautiful girls than I am in the city, and rich ones too,' said Louise, feeling a little curiosity to see this very handsome, rich young man.

'Mr. Luroff cares nothing about rich girls, for his father has oceans of wealth,' replied Miss Bruce. 'It is personal beauty that he's after, and I hope you will not consider it flattery in me, when I express the

opinion that he has seldom, if ever, seen so handsome a young lady as you are.'

'I should not be so likely to consider it flattery in you, as I should if a young gentleman should make such a remark,' answered Louise, smiling. 'Do you think I'm handsome?'

'I certainly do,' replied Miss Bruce. 'The first time I saw you, and that time you well remember, I thought you were exceedingly beautiful, and since then I have seen no reason to change my opinion.'

'My mother told me the afternoon she died, just before you came in, that she sometimes wished I was more homely; for she thought beauty was a snare in which its possessor might be caught, if great caution was not used.'

'True, my dear Louise, every word true,' replied this heartless woman. 'You had a good mother, and she gave you many good lessons.'

'I have lost one mother, but it seems to me I have found another,' said Louise, in a voice which told how deep were her feelings of gratitude. 'O, I never shall forget my mother's last words, or, almost the last words she ever uttered. She said, *beware of the libertine*.'

'Very good advice,' said Miss Bruce. 'Your mother's motives were good, but her disease was of such a nature that in her last moments she was very apt to magnify things, and to look through a false medium. I noticed, through the whole of your mother's sickness, that she was very sensitive upon some points, while she was more indifferent upon others. This is the natural consequence of a nervous affection. I've no doubt but your mother thought the city was overrun with libertines and dissolute young men, and hence her advice to you upon this subject; but, my dear girl, we who are in good health and strength, and in possession of all our faculties, must look at things calmly and dispassionately, as they really exist around us. Because there are some libertines in the world we must not therefore conclude that there are no virtuous young men. This course of reasoning would lead us astray, and we should fall into very great errors.'

'O, I think just as you do,' said Louise. 'I trust and believe there are a good many virtuous young gentlemen in the city, although I never had but a very limited acquaintance with them. Mother was always very particular in cautioning me about young gentlemen.'

'That is very natural and very proper in a mother when she has a handsome daughter to guard and protect,' said the artful woman.

'Are you acquainted with Henry Luroff?' inquired Louise.

'Very well,' replied Miss Bruce, feeling rejoiced that Louise was interested enough to make such an inquiry; 'he calls here frequently.'

'To see Miss Catherine, I suppose,' said Louise, smiling.

'O, no,' replied Miss Bruce. 'He comes to see me. His mother and I are great friends. We were intimately acquainted when we were girls, and notwithstanding she is so wealthy, yet she has not forgotten me. Mrs. Luroff is a nice lady. Henry was a little partial to Miss Seymour several months ago, but now he cares nothing about her. In fact he never loved her at all, and never told her he did. When he tells a young lady he loves her, she will know what to depend upon. Catherine thought he loved her, or rather she hoped he did, although he gave her no reasons for thinking so. She was not to be blamed for wishing he might become attached to her, for there is n't a girl in the city who would not have such wishes.'

The door bell now rang, and Miss Bruce answered the summons, and conducted Henry Luroff into a room where Louise could not hear what might be said.

'Has she come?' asked Henry.

'Yes; speak low, for she's now in the parlor,' she replied.

'Then her old mother's dead and buried, I suppose,' he said, going up to a mirror and adjusting his handkerchief and dickey.

'She is,' she answered. 'Louise came directly to my house from the funeral. Ah! Henry, you will say when you see her that I have not exaggerated her beauty. Catherine confesses she's very beautiful, and that is a good deal for her to acknowledge, under all the circumstances.'

'Where's her old drunken father?' he asked. 'I understand he's the devil all over when his temper is up, unless he's so drunk he can't stand, and then he's harmless, I suppose.'

'He's gone to some boarding house, so Louise informs me,' she replied. 'He's a high spirited man, and very much attached to his daughter. He would fight for her until the last drop of his blood was spilt. If he should get a hint about her forming a connection with you, he would pull the house down over our heads.'

'A little liquor will quiet him, and he shall have enough of that,' said Luroff.

'Not, I fear, when his daughter's virtue is at stake,' she replied. 'I once heard him say that he would tear out the heart of any man who

attempted to seduce his daughter; but he was considerably excited by liquor at that time.'

'I will endeavor to keep clear of him,' he said. 'I can take care of his daughter in less than twenty-four hours.'

'I do n't know about that,' said she. 'Louise is a shrewd girl, as well as a beautiful one. She must be led along by degrees. She must be approached very cautiously, or she will flare up. If she suspects your designs, your game will be up. And I know you would regret that circumstance as much as I should.'

Well, I'm impatient to see this angel,' he said. 'I want to feel her soft hand.'

'Ah! she has a most beautiful hand,' said Miss Bruce. 'I do n't see how she contrived to keep her hands looking so nice, when she took care of her mother in her last sickness, and did all the house work besides. Before we go up to see her, you must call me Mrs. Comer, when you speak of me, for that is the name which she supposes belongs to me. She knows me by no other name. I assumed it when I first became acquainted with her. Be sure and call me Mrs. Comer. Remember that, for if she should find out that it is not my true name, her suspicions would be excited and our game would be up.'

'I understand you, Mrs. Comer,' he said, smiling. 'I call you by your assumed name so that it may become somewhat familiar. Come, lead on, and show me the fair maiden. My heart begins to beat already.'

'I will, but first you must hand over fifty dollars,' she said. 'I have already spent considerable, in getting the affair thus far advanced.'

He paid her the required sum, and after cautioning him to proceed gently and adroitly, she led the way to the parlor and introduced him to Louise. The young lady blushed just enough to add to the charms of her beauty. Although Luroff's expectations were raised almost to the clouds, yet he was not disappointed in the least degree. In fact he found her much more beautiful and fascinating than he anticipated. True enough his heart did beat now with most pleasing emotions. Of all the ladies he had ever been acquainted with, he at once pronounced this girl the most beautiful. The mistress watched the movements of his countenance, and knew that he was highly pleased and gratified. Luroff had upon his person the best his wardrobe afforded. He sported an elegant gold headed cane, and wore a splendid gold watch and

chain. One hand was covered with a white kid glove, and upon the little finger of the other was a massive gold ring.

Louise was dressed in the black silk gown her father purchased for her before the death of her mother. She had not a single ornament about her person, save a small gold ring her mother gave her during her last sickness. She examined very minutely the young man's countenance and every article of his dress. He noticed she eyed him quite closely, and his vanity induced him to believe that she was much pleased with his appearance. The truth is, he always had a very good opinion of himself, and great confidence in his powers to please the gentler sex. Often he had boasted to his associates that no woman could long resist his charms. And well might he entertain such a favorable opinion of himself, for he had always been very successful among the females. If the rule is a good one, that practice makes perfect, then he might be considered quite an adept in the art of pleasing the ladies. His father being immensely rich, the son of course had a free passport to all classes of society.

'Have you always resided in the city, Miss Preston?' inquired Luroff, gazing upon her smooth cheek and rosy lips with much interest.

'Ever since I was four years old,' she replied. 'At that age I came with my parents from the country to this city.'

'You have recently buried your mother, I understand from Mrs. Comer,' he said.

'Yes, sir, that has been my sad fortune,' she replied. 'But it is a great comfort to me to believe that my mother is happy. She suffered a good deal in the latter part of her life on account of the intemperance of my father, but her troubles are now at an end, I trust and believe.'

'Yes, dear girl, your mother is in heaven, if any mortal ever goes there,' said the hypocritical Miss Bruce, alias Comer. 'She was an excellent woman. I felt a very deep interest in her. I hardly ever saw one of my own sex, except my own mother, whom I loved more than I did your mother.'

'That's putting it on quite thick,' thought Luroff. 'I see in what quarter the wind sets. I must assume a little sanctity, just so as to take off the wire edge. But, by heavens! I hate to act the hypocrite worse than almost any other character. I must, however, follow the lead of the mistress of this house, for she knows how to set her corns. This beautiful girl must be won at all events. I never have yet been

beaten, and I think I shall not be now. O, what sparkling eyes, and fresh, tempting lips. She must—she shall be mine! This is indeed the rarest chance I have ever had. I should not be ashamed to wait on this girl to a public assembly. Ashamed! no; I should be proud to do it.'

'You have been very kind to my mother, Mrs. Comer, and if anything done on earth is remembered in heaven, then will my mother remember your kindness,' said Louise, while a bright tear stood in her dark eye.

'By heavens! there's much sensibility in the fair creature's heart,' said Henry, within himself. 'She has the qualifications of a lover. Nature has laid the groundwork, and art shall raise the superstructure. I must make her love me before I can proceed farther. Her heart must be changed by the talisman of love, and then she will fall an easy victim to my arts.'

'All I did for your mother was done freely,' said Miss Constantia Bruce. 'It is a pleasure for me to do good to the poor and distressed.'

'Well, the keeper of this establishment is the most consummate hypocrite I ever saw,' thought Luroff. 'I can't be so pious as she is, if I were to tax my powers to the utmost. I'll give up to her.'

Louise made no reply to what Miss Bruce said, but sat in a very thoughtful mood. No one seemed disposed to break the silence. Young Luroff gazed upon the fair Louise with emotions of delight.

At last, Miss Bruce asked Luroff if he should not like to hear some music.

'I should be delighted to hear your piano discourse some music,' he replied. 'I think it is a very sweet toned instrument. You do not play, I believe, Miss Bruce, I would say, Mrs. Comer. I saw a young lady yesterday by the name of Bruce, and hence I made the mistake; I ask your pardon.'

'O, it is not very strange that you should be thinking of the young ladies,' said she. 'I suppose Miss Bruce is young and handsome, and you know I lay claim to neither of those qualities. True, I was once young, but I will not say I was ever handsome. You ask me if I play the piano. I do not. I wish I had learnt in my younger days. Miss Preston plays beautifully.'

'Ah! does she, indeed,' he said, being surprised that a girl of such

poor parents should possess such an accomplishment. 'I should be happy to hear you play, Miss Preston, if agreeable.'

'I will do it to please you, but I do not consider myself a skilful player by any means,' she replied, taking a seat at the instrument.

'Have you any favorite tune you wish me to play?'

'Not any,' he replied. 'Suit your own taste, Miss Preston, and I feel quite sure you will gratify mine.'

'That is by no means certain,' she replied, commencing a very sweet tune, and playing very softly yet distinctly. He watched her beautiful hands, and was delighted with the graceful motions of her fingers as she swept them over the keys.

After she had finished the tune, she sat examining the piano-forte as if she had made some discovery which interested her greatly.

'O, Mrs. Comer, I know this piano!' she exclaimed. 'See these two letters, L. P., on this little plate. They are quite small.'

'I see them,' said the woman. 'They are the initials of your name. This is quite a coincidence. You say you know the instrument; where did you ever see it before?'

'It was mine,' replied Louise. 'Father bought it for me five years ago. About a year ago, a sheriff took it for father's debts, and sold it at auction. I thought it looked natural last evening, but I did n't think it was once mine; but it was, Mrs. Comer; I know it for a certainty.'

Miss Bruce was greatly astonished to hear that this poor drunkard's daughter ever owned a piano-forte. She examined the initials very closely, and so did Luroff.

'There are the initials of Miss Preston's name, sure enough,' said Luroff, bending down his head that he might more clearly see the letters, and at the same time have his cheek close to hers.

'It was bought at auction about a year since,' said Miss Bruce. 'It is no doubt the same instrument you once owned, for it was not new when I had it.'

Louise was in raptures at meeting with her long lost piano-forte, for she never expected to meet with it again. Luroff expressed great joy at the discovery. Miss Bruce soon after made her exit, leaving Luroff to manage his own business. He was very polite, attentive, and flattering; but he dared not be too familiar with Louise, for there was something in her motions, and the expressions of her singularly beauti-

ful countenance, that forbade him to make any improper advances. He never was so much troubled before to know how to proceed as he was in this case. It seemed to him, during the whole of this interview, that she was aware of his character; still he could not really believe that such could be the fact. He tarried with her nearly two hours, and before he took his leave, he told Louise that he would buy her piano of the lady, and make a present of it to her. This was highly gratifying to her; still she did not tell him whether she would accept it of him or not. He finally left her most singularly impressed.

CHAPTER VII.

'By a divine instinct, men's minds mistrust
Ensuing danger; as, by proof, we see
The water swell before a boisterous storm.'



THREE days had passed since Louise Preston removed to the house kept by Miss Bruce, and not a word had she heard from her father. During these three days, Henry Luroff had visited her four times; and at the fourth interview, he declared his love for her. She received the declara-

tion with a better grace and with less emotion than might reasonably have been expected of a young lady circumstanced as she was. Catherine Seymour watched the progress of events with a deep interest. She continued to hope Louise would have power enough to resist the temptations that assailed her. She had once or twice, when conversing with Louise, hinted by looks and actions, if not by words, that she must be on her guard against the advances of this young man. Louise understood her inuendoes, and knew they were intended to lessen the character of Luroff in her esteem; but she placed no reliance upon them, because she naturally supposed they sprang from envy; for she had been told by Miss Bruce that Catherine still cherished an affection for this young man. Catherine dared not speak openly against Luroff, lest she might lose her own situation. The mistress of the establishment kept a strict watch over her, for she had some doubts and misgivings in relation to the course this girl might pursue. The truth is, she had been kept by Luroff for some three or four months; but recently he had grown tired of her; and now that Louise had made her appearance,

he had neglected her altogether. Her feelings began to grow exceedingly sour towards him, and it was impossible for her to conceal them entirely, although she made a great effort to do so. Luroff was, in fact, the person who seduced her; and this hellish work he effected, in the first place, under a promise of marriage. She had loved him; but now that love was fast turning to hate, and began to produce very serious effects upon her heart.

The next morning after Luroff had declared his passion for Louise in set phrase, and urged his suit with all the power he was master of, Miss Bruce had a conversation with her upon the subject. Louise was not aware that this hypocritical woman was in possession of all the facts already, for as yet she had said nothing to her in relation to the subject. All Miss Bruce had done, was occasionally to praise up Luroff, and slyly hint that he might fall in love with her.

‘Well, Louise, I must confess that young Luroff manifests a good deal of interest in you,’ said Miss Bruce, smiling. ‘Really I do n’t know but something serious will grow out of the affair yet. I do n’t suppose he has declared any love for you; has he? It would indeed be a singularly good fortune for you if he should become your husband. It would make a great noise in the fashionable world, for there’s scarcely a young man in the city who’s so well known as Henry Luroff.’

Louise did not make an immediate reply to Madam’s catechisms, but held down her head and blushed. If Luroff had not already told her of the progress he had made, she would have known it by the looks of Louise.

‘I see by the expression of your face how it is,’ continued Miss Bruce. ‘Well, I can’t say I’m much surprised. I noticed Luroff the first time he saw you, and thought then he was smitten with your charms. Has he said anything about love? You know I’m your friend, and of course feel an interest in this matter.’

‘He has declared his passion for me, and in a very earnest manner too,’ said Louise. ‘But Heaven only knows how sincere he may be.’

‘O, Henry Luroff will not deceive you,’ said the mistress. ‘Whatever he says to you about love, you can rely upon. He’s no trifter in these matters, I can assure you. And to speak my honest convictions to you, dear girl, I think he is too seriously impressed to make a joke of it. I suppose you return his feelings in some degree; do you not?’

'I hardly know what answer to make,' replied the innocent girl. 'I don't think I love him near as much as he pretends to love me.'

'Probably you do not,' replied Miss Bruce. 'It is generally the case that the ladies love the gentlemen because they first love them. Did he attempt to make any demonstration of his love, by any means than by words?'

'O, yes; he wanted to kiss me, but I did not permit him,' replied Louise. 'Somehow or other, there is something about him forbidding, I should not suffer any young man to kiss me on so short an acquaintance; and certainly I felt no disposition to let him.'

Miss Bruce did not like to hear Louise talk in this manner. Luroff had not made so much progress in the work of seduction as she hoped he had, nor so much as she had reason to suppose he had, from the account of the matter Luroff himself gave her. True, as Louise stated, there was something forbidding in his manner, and the peculiar expression of his countenance, which made her shrink from his presence. There was an impression upon her mind, which she could not shake off, that he was not all he pretended to be. It seemed to her, that there was a want of sincerity on his part, notwithstanding the favorable opinion she had formed of him, from the evidence Miss Bruce had given in his favor.

'It is very natural that you should have such feelings,' said Miss Bruce. 'He loves you so ardently that it makes him appear almost awkward. No young man can act naturally, however accomplished and genteel he may be in his address, when the new-born sentiment of love is pressing his heart. Henry Luroff is an accomplished, finished gentleman, and I've no doubt he loves you as he does his own life. But I commend you for being cautious how you receive the addresses of any young man. I should have cautioned you much more than I have, if any other person had addressed you but Henry Luroff; but I know him so well, and am on such intimate terms of friendship with his mother, that I cannot suspect his motives. If I should, I fear I should do him great injustice.'

'He is very anxious to have me attend a fashionable ball with him this evening; but I told him I must consult you before I gave him an answer,' said Louise.

'You did right, my good girl,' said Miss Bruce. 'He had the politeness to break the matter to me. I told him I had no objection to

your going with him, if you felt any disposition to do so. I would advise you to accept his offer; but, as your mother died so recently, you will not probably join in the dance.'

'I thought of all that,' said Louise; 'and I hesitated about going on that account.'

'You can go as a spectator, and there will be no impropriety in it,' said Miss Bruce. 'It will be a splendid ball, and all the ladies of fashion will be there. I can very readily see why Luroff wishes you to accompany him; for by so doing, he will gratify both his love and his ambition. He knows you will be the most beautiful lady in the ball-room, and wishes to make the ladies of the upper circles stare in wonder and surprise when they see you.'

The matter was finally agreed upon, and preparations were being made for the evening. Luroff had purchased some beautiful bracelets for Louise to wear, and Miss Bruce had selected several articles from her own wardrobe to adorn her person and make her appear out in grand style. Catherine Seymour was aware of all that was going on. Even Miss Bruce called for her assistance in dressing Louise for the ball. She lent her aid because her mistress requested her; but bitter were her feelings and violent her emotions on the occasion, yet she made great efforts to conceal them.

Evening came, and a carriage drove up to the door. Henry Luroff alighted and went into the house, full of sweet smiles and graceful bows. Louise was ready. He took her by the arm, and conducted her to the carriage. Catherine saw them enter the carriage, and at that moment she swore, in her own heart, revenge upon Henry Luroff. She turned away, and went to her own chamber where Luroff had often met her. Bitter, and corroding to her feelings, were her thoughts that night.

'It is a beautiful evening, and great preparations have been made for the ball,' said Luroff, as the carriage rolled over the pavements in Broadway, and bore them along to the assembly. 'It will, I doubt not, be a splendid affair. No pains or expense have been spared in getting it up. You will now have an opportunity of seeing all the belles of the upper circles in the city; but, my dear Louise, let me tell you, that you will not see any lady this evening so beautiful as you are yourself. I know all the fashionable ladies in the city, but my heart was never touched with the sentiment of love until I saw you.'

‘Perhaps there will be some ladies there from other cities, whom you have never seen,’ she replied, feeling a slight touch of fear that some lady might grace the ball who would eclipse her beauty; for her ambition was now excited, and she felt as if she wished to be the belle of the evening.

‘There may, and probably will, be some from other sections of the country, but none whose presence will excite so much sensation as yours,’ he replied, taking her by the hand and pressing it.

Their hands being covered with white kid gloves, she did not at first withdraw her hand from his grasp. This was a very encouraging circumstance, and he noted it well. He had several times attempted to press her bare hand, during his interviews with her, but had never been able to succeed; and now that she permitted her hand to remain in his, he was highly encouraged as well as gratified. His pleasure, however, was destined to be of short duration; for she soon withdrew her hand, saying, very coldly, as he thought, that he might soil her gloves.

‘That is decidedly cool,’ he said to himself. ‘She’s the hardest case I have ever met. If she had not withdrawn her hand just as she did, I should have attempted to kiss her. It is lucky I did not, for matters are not ripe enough yet for that pleasing exercise. I don’t see as I have gained one inch in my progress yet. As Miss Bruce said, she is shrewd as well as beautiful. But the harder the battle, the more glorious the victory.’

They had now arrived at the place where the ball was held. A large portion of the company had arrived, and the dancing had already commenced. The hall was most brilliantly illuminated, and the music was lively and animating. The assembly was very large, and embraced the *elite* of the city. Every countenance wore the aspect of gaiety and cheerfulness. Mothers were there with their daughters sparkling with rich jewelry. With a beating heart, sparkling eyes, and cheeks flushed with the tints of the rose, Louise took the arm of her gallant and entered the hall. When they entered there was no dancing, as the cotillion setts had just left the floor. Luroff promenaded the whole length of the hall, that he might the better show off his companion. Being well known to a majority of those present, he was noticed the moment he made his entrance. And if he had not been known, the beauty of his companion’s face, and the grace and ease of her movements, would have attracted the notice of all in the room. The inquiry

soon went round among the ladies, as well as the gentlemen, 'who has Henry Luroff with him now? He's always hunting up some new flame. She's very beautiful, came from the South perhaps, and an heiress.' Thus these inquiries went round in the gay assembly, while all eyes were turned upon the beautiful Louise Preston. She knew she was very much noticed, and her pride and ambition were excited. Luroff, too, was highly gratified at the curiosity manifested in every countenance. He saw that his companion was the cynosure of all eyes. Louise acted well her part. Feeling conscious of her beauty, and being more gaily and fashionably dressed than she ever was before, she assumed the most pleasing airs and graceful movements she could command for the occasion. The idea too, that she was gallanted by a very accomplished and rich young man inflated her vanity, but her heart was yet a stranger to the operations of love. Other emotions had been awakened, but those of the tender passion had not yet moved her heart. Such a scene was not calculated to make her love her gallant, as he intended. In this movement he misjudged. Had he kept her at her boarding house, and continued to ply his arts, together with the influence and cunning of the hypocritical Miss Bruce, his chance of success would have been better. In her present situation, she saw too much to interest her mind, to think of love. The novelties, splendor, and gaiety, which surrounded her, arrested her attention and awakened in her bosom more of ambition than of love.

Among the many whose curiosity and interest were excited, there were two young gentlemen gazing upon her, who had seen her once before under very different circumstances. These were, Thomas Clinton, the young painter, and his friend and companion, Edgar Thompson. The former happened to cast his eyes upon her the moment she entered the hall, and although she was dressed very differently from what she was when he saw her in the street, with a bundle under her arm, going to the dressmaker's, yet he immediately recognized her lovely face, beautiful form, and graceful motions. The painter's eye could not be deceived, for ever since he had seen her in the street, her exquisitely moulded form, and peculiarly expressive face, had been floating in his fancy and imagination. Her image was so deeply engraven upon his heart, that he would have recognized her in any place or under any circumstances. The moment he saw her enter the room, he hurried to his friend, who was standing upon the other side of the hall, and

directed his attention to the 'Belle of the Bowery,' as he significantly called her.

'By heavens, Edgar, see!' he whispered, pointing with a trembling finger to Louise, as she hung upon the arm of the libertine. 'There's that beautiful girl we saw in the street.'

'I believe in my soul you're right,' replied his companion. 'It is the same one, but how changed! I should have hardly recognized her.'

'How changed!' repeated the young painter. 'She's not changed at all, only in costume. There's the same symmetrical form, the same radiant face, the same graceful motions. I care not for the clothes she wears. It is nature's work, and not the milliner's or dressmaker's, I look at.'

'My opinion is, Tom, that you are actually in love with that girl,' said Edgar, smiling. 'If I were you, I would keep some of my feelings in reserve, lest she might prove of doubtful reputation, to say the least of her.'

'She may be; but by heavens, she has not the least appearance of a wanton,' said the painter. 'Let us go nearer to her, so that we can look directly into her face and eyes.'

They now carelessly approached nearer to her. Luroff saw their movements, and was much gratified with the interest they appeared to manifest. He was acquainted with Thompson, and knew Clinton by reputation. His first thought was, to introduce Louise to Thompson, but a second thought determined him otherwise. 'Let them feast their eyes on her beauty, and envy me,' he said, within himself. 'I will not introduce her, for they will probably think she's some great heiress from the South; or, may be, from Europe. Yes, from Europe! That's it. I'll pass her off as the daughter of some English nobleman; or, at any rate, their imaginations shall not be trammelled by the facts in her history.'

'A wanton!' whispered Clinton to his companion, pressing his arm quite nervously, and gazing upon her face with as much interest as if his easel was upon his arm, and his pencil in his hand, for the purpose of painting her portrait. 'No, Edgar, there's not one particle of evidence, in a single lineament of her angelic face, that she is such a character. All is freshness, beauty, purity, innocence, and loveliness. I would paint that face for nothing, and give something to boot.'

'If she's not a wanton, she's in a fair way to become one, if

“she continues long in the society of Henry Luroff,” answered young Thompson.

“That may be true, for we read that the angels once fell from purity and virtue,” replied Clinton. “But she’s pure and innocent now, else I’m no judge of the human face divine.”

“I must confess I feel some curiosity to know who she is,” said Thompson. “That she is the most beautiful female in this hall, and the belle of the evening, there can be but one opinion; and the swelling air and pompous manner of her gallant, shows that he knows it too.”

“The belle of the evening!” repeated the young painter, impatiently. “By heavens, Edgar, she’s the belle of the city—of the country—yes, of the whole world! I never saw such beauty before in any woman, and I have painted some of the handsomest female faces in these regions. I wish I could have the privilege of sketching even the outlines of her face and form. I could fill up the picture from recollection.”

“Do you think you could give the expression of her eyes?” inquired Thompson, smiling.

“Yes,” replied the painter. “I can see it very distinctly when my eyes are closed. She has a very dark eye, but they are not black. They possess all the brilliancy of black eyes, and the softness of blue ones. Her eyebrows, too! see how distinctly and exquisitely nature has pencilled them upon her clear, polished forehead.”

“Yes, and her lips!” said Thompson, wishing to help the young enthusiast along in his description, and smiling very archly. “They outstrip the rose, when it spreads out its beautiful leaves to the morning sun while the dew is still upon them. Ah, and her teeth! What pearls are they! The skill of no dentist can equal them. Her bosom—”

“There—there—Edgar, you have gone quite far enough,” said Clinton. “None but painters are allowed to descend to particulars. It will be well for you to confine your remarks to the facial features, and leave it for me to make more extended observations.”

“You’re done up, Tom,” said Thompson. “There’s no mistake about it. You’re decidedly and absolutely in love with that belle. It will never do for you to take her picture, for it would upset your philosophy, and, just as likely as not, make a maniac of you. No, no, Tom; take my advice, and not run that risk.”

'I would paint her picture, if I knew — no, I won't say what I was going to,' replied Clinton. But give me a chance, lay some plan for her to sit for me to take her portrait, and I'll copy it, and give you one.'

'I'll try,' said Thompson. 'Being acquainted with Luroff, I will advise him to have her picture painted, if I can get an opportunity to speak with him alone. Perhaps I may.'

'Do, Edgar,' said Clinton, very earnestly. 'Tell him it shall not cost him a cent.'

The dance went on, and all was life and animation. The ladies kept their eyes upon Louise, and wondered why she did not dance. Some began to think she was the daughter of some foreign nobleman, and felt herself above them. There were a thousand conjectures, but none could satisfy themselves. Luroff saw the interest and curiosity her appearance excited, and he took pride in letting them stare and wonder. He kept aloof from even his most intimate acquaintances, and did not introduce Louise to a single person during the evening. Young Thompson watched for an opportunity when he might speak with Luroff alone, but he adhered so closely to Louise that it was quite late in the night before he could find a chance. During all this time, the young painter was placing himself in a position where he could have the best view of the fair maiden. If her gallant conducted her to one part of the hall, Clinton would be sure to be found in that vicinity; and if she went to another, he very cautiously followed. Fond as he was of dancing, he neglected that amusement altogether. He felt no disposition to join in any of the evening festivities, but his whole soul was absorbed in the contemplation of this girl's beauty. He was determined to find out the house to which Luroff conducted her, if Thompson did not succeed in having an interview with her gallant, and an agreement made to have her sit for her picture.

At last, not long before the party broke up, Luroff left his fair charge a few moments, and passed out of the hall to an ante-room where some liquors were kept. On his return, Thompson met him in the passage-way.

'For heaven's sake, tell me who that beautiful girl is, you wait upon this evening,' said Thompson. 'You're the greatest case for selecting the prettiest ladies of any fellow in the city.'

'Then you think she's rather good looking, do you?' asked Luroff, in a very pompous manner.

‘Good looking!’ repeated Thompson, ‘why, she’s an angel of beauty! Where did you pick her up? Who is she? You’re a fortunate fellow, always some beautiful girl under your wing.’

‘She came across the Atlantic in the last steamship,’ replied Luroff. ‘She’s a daughter of a nobleman.’

‘What’s her name?’ inquired Thompson.

‘Pardon me, Edgar, for withholding her name,’ said Luroff, looking very wise; ‘I’m not at liberty to disclose that. She and her father are travelling this country incog.’

‘The next news I shall hear, you will be travelling with them,’ said Thompson, smiling. ‘And I should n’t be much surprised to see your marriage in the papers, before many weeks shall have passed.’

‘Well, strange things sometimes happen in this world,’ replied Luroff.

‘Thomas Clinton wishes to paint her picture,’ said Thompson. ‘He thinks her likeness would make one of the most beautiful pictures ever painted. He will take it for nothing, for the sake of having a copy to place in his studio. He has several very fine faces there now, but he says this lady’s would exceed them all. I would prevail upon her to have her portrait taken. Clinton is the best artist we have in the city, and would paint a most splendid picture.’

‘I think very favorably of the proposition,’ said Luroff. ‘I will consult with her about it, and, if she has no objections, I will have her portrait painted. I think myself it would make a most exquisitely beautiful picture.’

‘Yes, I’ve no doubt you think so,’ replied Thompson.

‘I understand Clinton succeeds very well, as an artist,’ said Luroff. ‘I will bear this affair in mind. I must now be with her.’

While Luroff and Thompson were conversing, the young painter was by no means idle. He took a seat not far from Louise, and gazed upon her as far as good breeding would permit. She noticed that he appeared to take more interest in her than any one else, although there were none but stared at her, more or less. When she first saw Clinton, the first part of the evening, it seemed to her that she had seen him somewhere, but when, and where, she could not recollect; at any rate, she could not conceal from herself the fact, that she liked the looks of him better than she did any other young man she had seen in the hall, not excepting him who waited upon her. There is sometimes a strange

and mysterious interchange of thoughts and feelings, between persons, when not a word is spoken by either. It was so in this instance.

There was something in the peculiar expression of the young painter's countenance, which impressed her with the belief that he had conceived a very strong interest for her; and this belief awakened in her heart a corresponding feeling. But we cannot stop the course of our narrative to discuss any phsycological questions, or to inquire into the causes which sometimes mysteriously induce a gentleman and lady to love each other.

The assembly broke up towards morning, and Luroff and Louise were conveyed back to her boarding house. The young painter sought his bed, but he closed his eyes only to see the image of the drunkard's daughter. Twice he awoke in his dreams, while he thought he was painting the rose-tinted lips of this lovely girl.

CHAPTER VIII.

'Full many a lady

I have eyed with best regard; and many a time
The harmony of their tongues hath into bondage
Brought my too diligent ear; for several virtues
Have I liked several women; never any
With so full soul, but some defect in her
Did quarrel with the noblest grace she owed,
And put it to the foil. But you; oh you!
So perfect, and so peerless, are created
Of every feature best.'



HE next day, in the afternoon, after the ball recorded in the last chapter, Thomas Clinton sat in his studio, reflecting upon the scenes of the last evening. A young lady belonging to the higher walks in life had just been sitting for her portrait, but was now gone. She was not so beautiful as Louise Preston, and yet she was very far from being ugly. The young artist, if he had not seen Louise,

would have pronounced her decidedly handsome; but now his dreams were such, that he could see real beauty but in one female; and in her he believed he had found it in all its perfection.

'This lady, who has just been sitting, and whose portrait I have almost finished, is thought to be one of the most beautiful girls in the city; but how infinitely she falls short of the angelic being I saw at the assembly last evening! I wonder who she can be. Luroff says she is the daughter of an English nobleman. Fudge! Luroff lies! The daughter of an English nobleman walking our streets in a common calico dress, with a bundle under her arm! She's handsome enough, though, for the daughter of a nobleman, or a king. But such characters don't have the most beautiful daughters. It is in the middle ranks of life, that the

most beauty is found. Besides, that girl does not have the aristocratic air and hauteur about her which characterize the ladies of the upper circles. Her manner is simple, unaffected, natural, and perfectly graceful. Her form is such, and every muscle is so constructed, that she cannot make an awkward movement without giving her pain. O, if she comes to sit for her picture, I will ascertain who she is, if possible. It is a shame that such beauty and innocence should be tampered with by such a fellow as Henry Luroff,—a libertine of the most dangerous stamp. But he may be engaged to her, and intend to marry her. I should pity her, even if that were the case.'

While the young artist was thus communing with his own thoughts, Louise was at her boarding-house, making preparations to go to his rooms to have her likeness painted. Catherine Seymour sought an opportunity to speak with her before she went.

'I suppose you had a gay time last evening, at the ball,' said Catherine.

'It was a very splendid party,' replied Louise. 'The ball was attended by great numbers.'

'Did you and Mr. Luroff join in the dance?' inquired Catherine.

'We did not,' replied Louise. 'I did not think it proper for me to dance; and Mrs. Comer was of the same opinion. You know I have recently lost my mother.'

'True; but I should have thought that Luroff would have danced, he's so fond of the amusement; but I suppose he refrained on your account,' said Catherine. 'Luroff is a very kind and loving young man. Do n't you think so?'

'He appears very kind,' replied Louise. 'He is good-hearted, is he not?'

'He's very loving, and no doubt you have found him so,' said Catherine. 'He's quite apt to fall in love with the girls, and I suppose he has made a declaration to you of his great love.'

'It does not become me to speak much about such matters,' replied Louise.

'There, Miss Bruce is coming,' said Catherine. 'Do n't mention to her what I've said; but let me tell you to beware of Henry Luroff.'

'Miss Bruce is coming!' repeated Louise. 'Who is Miss Bruce? I know no such lady.'

'Did I say Miss Bruce?' asked Catherine. 'I meant Mrs. Comer.'

I thought I heard her on the stairs below. I suppose she's going with you to the painter's.

'She is,' replied Louise. 'But why do you warn me to beware of Mr. Luroff? Has he deceived you?'

'Do n't ask me any more questions,' replied Catherine. 'I have given you warning, but I beg of you not to breathe a syllable to Mrs. Comer. You are a virtuous girl, but I—no matter. She is coming. Do n't say a word to her, for Heaven's sake. The time will come, when you will feel that you have reason to thank me for this timely hint, whatever may have been my motive in suggesting it.'

The mistress of the house now entered the room, and soon she and Louise were on their way to the studio of Clinton, the young painter.

'You look very fine this afternoon, notwithstanding you were out so late last night,' said Miss Bruce. 'You found Mr. Luroff a very agreeable companion, I dare say. Ah, dear Louise, he's very much in love with you. He means to have your picture, if he can't get the original. Do n't you think he's a very fine young man?'

'He appears very well,' replied Louise.

'Yes, indeed he does, and he's quite as good as he seems, I can assure you,' said this bawd. 'I conclude he still continues in declaring his love for you. Did he get a chance to taste the sweetness of your lips?'

Louise was somewhat shocked to hear such a question from her friend, but she made no reply. Miss Bruce saw that she was not guarded enough in expression, and regretted that she had asked such a question.

'I perceive my question was rather an unguarded one,' continued this hypocrite. 'I only meant to inquire if he had kissed you. I have a little curiosity to know, because I have often heard him say he never would kiss a lady unless he loved her. Mr. Luroff has some notions very peculiar to himself, and this is one of them. I think he's the most particular young man I ever was acquainted with. Well, he's all the better for that.'

'I have no objection to answer your question, for I believe you asked it from pure motives,' replied Louise. 'He did not kiss me, but he made several attempts which I resisted. Did I not do right?'

'O, certainly, my dear girl,' replied Miss Bruce. 'Young ladies ought to be cautious how they permit the young men to be familiar with

them. Mr. Luroff is an excellent young man, and would not attempt to kiss you unless he was prompted to it by the purest affection and the best of motives ; but then you ought to be satisfied that he really loves you, before you permit him to take such liberties. No doubt of the sincerity and purity of his attachment, but then you ought to be fully satisfied, and I suppose you are by this time. There's scarcely another young man in the city for whom I have so much regard as I have for Henry Luroff. I should not have willingly consented that any other person should wait upon you. There is one thing I have been thinking about as we came along, and that is, not to let the painter know who you are, if he should have curiosity enough to ask the question. Your presence at the ball last evening created quite a sensation, and made a good deal of talk among the young people of the city. There are two very good reasons for that — first, your beauty, and second, because you appeared there under the protection of such a gallant. Mr. Luroff is well known in the higher and more refined classes, and unquestionably much would be said about the lady he waited upon. No doubt there is much inquiry going on among the ladies of fashion, to-day, about the stranger who appeared at the ball last night with Mr. Luroff. Let them wonder and talk. If I were you, I would say nothing about my name or parentage at present. Mr. Luroff knows, therefore he's not deceived. It would be wrong to deceive him, or rather, not let him know who you are. He does know all about it, and still he loves you. This is all right.'

'I will say nothing about myself, if you think it is best,' said Louise, feeling a suspicion enter her heart for the first time that there was some mystery about this woman. To be requested to keep her name and history a secret, did not seem to her to be exactly right. The warning, too, which Kate had given, was still lingering in her mind, but still she did not allow herself to believe that her very particular friend was a bad woman. It was a hard case for her to suppose that this woman, who had done so much for her, and watched over her sick and dying mother with so much apparent interest and holy feeling, could be a bad character. She made every effort to drive the dark suspicion back to the place whence it came, but still she could not entirely.

They had now reached the entrance to Thomas Clinton's studio, and entered his room at the moment he was in the midst of the deep and interesting soliloquy, a part of which is recorded above. The sight of

the beautiful girl aroused him from his reverie, and made his heart leap for joy.

‘Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Clinton the artist?’ inquired Miss Bruce, assuming rather an aristocratic manner.

‘That is my name, Madam,’ he replied. ‘And I suppose I bear the title of artist, but whether I deserve it, or not, may be more questionable.’

‘I wish, sir, to have the portrait of this young lady taken, who accompanies me,’ she said.

Louise instantly recognized the painter as the young man she saw at the ball last night. Her heart beat, but she concealed her emotions as much as possible.

‘I will paint it, Madam, with pleasure,’ he replied. ‘If I do justice to the young lady’s face, I shall make a very fine picture. And when I say this, I hope, Madam, you will not consider me a flatterer. The lady is your daughter, I presume.’

‘I hope, sir, you will paint her face as it is, and not attempt to throw in any extra touches, to make it look beautiful, when the original will not warrant those touches,’ she replied, purposely avoiding to answer his last question.

‘If I can succeed in giving a faithful and true representation of the original I shall feel quite satisfied,’ he replied. ‘I think the picture will not need any of those extra touches of the pencil to which you have alluded. It would be folly in me to attempt to paint the rose or the lily; at any rate, I should consider myself as very poorly set to work, if I should undertake to ornament them, or give them any additional hues.’

‘How long, sir, will it be necessary for her to remain?’ she inquired.

‘About an hour at the first sitting,’ he replied. ‘Have you any choice, Madam, with regard to position?’

‘I shall leave that matter, sir, altogether to your skill and good taste,’ she answered. ‘Take off your bonnet, my dear, and let Mr. Clinton see how he likes the arrangement of your hair. I think the hair is a very important part of a picture. She has very beautiful hair, and I hope you will paint natural.’

Louise, with a trembling hand and beating heart, laid off her bonnet, and exposed her finely moulded head to the gaze of the young artist. The feelings with which he beheld it we will not undertake to describe.

‘Permit me to say, Madam, that, although the lady’s hair is tastefully done up, yet I think it would look better to let it fall gracefully over her neck and shoulders, especially since it is inclined to curl a little. I think her picture would look better to have it painted as nature formed it. A face and head like hers, ought to be drawn upon the canvass without any artificial ornaments at all. Nature never made any combs, or jewels of any kind. My taste also would take those gold ornaments from her ears, and that bracelet from her wrist. You know it is an old maxim, and it is a true one, that beauty when unadorned is adorned the most.’

‘Well, sir, if you think it best, you may take it so,’ she replied.

‘Perhaps the lady herself has some choice,’ he said. Then turning to Louise, he continued, ‘have you any choice?’

‘I think your taste is better than mine,’ she replied, in a tremulous voice, whose peculiar tones sank deep into his heart.

Miss Bruce now requested her to unbraid her hair, and lay aside her ornaments. She did so. Clinton assisted her, and shook out her hair, so that it fell naturally and gracefully over her neck and shoulders. In doing so, his hand occasionally touched her clear forehead, and smooth, warm cheek. He felt a thrill pass through his nerves like a shock of the electric fluid. It was with much difficulty that he concealed the emotions which pressed his heart.

‘There, Madam, do you not think she looks better than she did before?’ he inquired.

‘I must confess I do,’ replied Miss Bruce. ‘Look in the glass, my dear, and see how you like your appearance. ‘I think your hair looks beautifully.’

‘O, I like it very much,’ said Louise, examining herself in a mirror which hung up at the side of the room. ‘I prefer to have my picture painted as I now am.’

‘Well, let it be so painted, then,’ replied Miss Bruce. ‘I’m going out to do some shopping, and will call in the course of an hour. I hope, Mr. Clinton, you will do your best.’

Miss Bruce now left, and the young artist seated Louise behind some green baize screens, where a soft light fell upon her beautiful countenance. He placed her in the most bewitching attitude which his skill could suggest, or his modesty would permit. Words were not sufficient to direct her how to place herself, he thought; therefore he

made use of his hands in giving her the attitude his taste proposed. He even took hold of her hand, in order to place it in the most easy and natural position upon her lap. These preliminary movements were very pleasing to him. Now, having placed her beauteous form and lovely face in the right attitude, he took his easel and brush, and began to sketch the outlines. It was a dangerous business for the young and enthusiastic artist. He looked first on her face, and then upon the canvass before him.

‘O, heavens!’ he said, within himself, as he plied his pencil, ‘what artist can do justice to such beauty? Who can paint that face, or represent on the canvass, by the most skilful combination of colors, the light of that heavenly love which beams from the liquid depths of her dark and lustrous eyes? Who can give those tints which are upon her lips? My task is indeed a hard, but a most pleasing one. Who is she? What is her name? Was she born of the woman who came with her, or was she dropped from the clouds as a specimen of the works above?’

Thus soliloquised this enthusiast, as he proceeded in sketching the outlines of her head, preparatory to the more difficult task of giving the peculiar expression which beamed from every lineament of her countenance. He continued to work awhile, with the most intense feeling and great assiduity. At last he became somewhat exhausted from the exercise, and said, ‘you may rise a few minutes, and rest yourself. It is hard to be confined to any one position for any considerable length of time. I’m somewhat fatigued myself.’

‘I’m not much tired,’ she replied, rising up, and examining several portraits which stood around the room. ‘These are your works, I suppose. They are very beautiful paintings.’

‘It does not become me to praise my own works, but I believe the persons for whom they were taken are satisfied with them. I think I saw you at the ball last evening.’

‘You did, I presume, for I very well recollect of seeing you there,’ she replied, looking him full in the face.

‘How slight a circumstance will sometimes affect the heart! His hope was much strengthened by the simple fact that she recollected his face. This he considered a favorable symptom, and took much encouragement from it.

‘I would not be too inquisitive, but I would ask if you have been

long acquainted with the young man who waited upon you at the assembly last evening?' he inquired.

'But a few days,' she replied. 'Are you acquainted with him?'

'By reputation only,' he answered, in a manner which somewhat roused her suspicions.

'He is a virtuous young man, I trust, and respectable, is he not?' she asked.

'His father is very rich,' he replied. 'Is the lady who accompanied you here your mother?'

'O, no, my mother died a short time since,' she said, feeling for the moment as if she had gone too far in answering his question, as her mistress had cautioned her about talking.

'I'm not acquainted with the lady who came with you,' he said.

'You said you knew Mr. Luroff by reputation,' she resumed. 'His reputation is good, is it not?'

'He may be your lover, and if his reputation is bad, you would not have me say so and wound your feelings, would you?' he inquired.

'You would not hesitate to wound my feelings, would you, if you knew, by so doing, you might save me from misery and disgrace?' she asked.

'O, no, I think I should not,' he replied. 'But I should wish to be sure that I should thus benefit you, before I could consent to inflict a single pain upon your heart.'

'I feel that you would not injure me, and whatever you say shall be kept a secret,' she said. 'Are you afraid to trust me? If you are not, tell me what you know of Henry Luroff.'

'No, by heavens, my heart bids me trust you,' he replied, with much feeling. 'I will tell you what the reputation of Luroff is. It is bad. He's a libertine.'

She suddenly started, as if a live serpent were coiling himself about her. Her countenance changed, and her dark eyes looked unutterable things. Seeing her extreme agitation, he resumed: 'Understand me right; I mean to say he has the reputation of being a libertine.'

'I do so understand you,' she replied; 'and I thank you for your frankness. I'm saved!'

'Then he has pretended to love you, has he?' he anxiously inquired.

'He has made most solemn and ardent declarations of his love,' she replied.

'And did you return his love?' he asked.

'I have not, but I might have done so, but for your timely information,' she answered.

'Then am I well repaid for what I have told you,' he said. 'What is the name of the lady who came with you?'

'Do not ask me any more questions,' she said. 'I do not feel at liberty to be very free in conversation at present. What I have said I hope you will keep within your own heart. My situation, I fear, is a very peculiar one, but Heaven will protect me. Strange suspicions have crossed my mind, within a few hours, but I must not breathe them to mortal ears.'

'Any assistance in my power, I will lend you,' he said. 'Perhaps I may do you good.'

'You're very kind,' she said, 'and you have my heartfelt thanks.'

She now took her seat again, and the young artist proceeded in his work, but he never before held the pencil with such a trembling hand as he now held it. He continued his work until just before Miss Bruce came. After she came in, he asked her for her name, and she gave him Mrs. Comer. They now departed, and just as they were going out Edgar Thompson came in.

'Ah, Tom, you're gone now, hook, line, bob, and sinker,' said Thompson, laughing. 'Then the daughter of the English nobleman has sat once for her picture. By the time you get through, I would not give much for your heart.'

'See here!' exclaimed the painter, leading his companion behind the screens, and pointing to the canvass upon which he had sketched the outlines of the beautiful creature. 'There! see the shape of that head, and those splendid ringlets!'

'Who is she? Where did she come from?' anxiously inquired Thompson. 'That will be a heavenly picture, when you have completed it. I suppose you will throw your whole soul into it. My opinion is, it will be your last work, for you never will love to paint another picture.'

'Oh, I forgot!' replied Clinton. 'I was just going to follow them cautiously, and mark the house where the angel stops. You go! They won't know you. Follow them, and note the house. Go quick, before they pass out of sight.'

Young Thompson immediately went out, and followed them. He traced them to the Bowery, and into a house which he marked.

He then returned, and informed the young artist what he had done. He laughed at Clinton, because he was under such a nervous excitement. The painter bore his jokes the best way he could. Neither of them knew the character of the house where Louise resided. True, they had suspicions that it was one of doubtful reputation. Before they separated, they agreed to go to the house and ascertain its character, if they could not find out in any other way.

Louise was now alarmed, but she managed with great prudence. Reluctant to believe that the mistress of the house was a bad woman, yet she had some very serious suspicions. Evening came, and so did Luroff.

'Ah, my love, you look bright this evening, as if you had a sound sleep last night, instead of attending the assembly,' said Luroff, taking a seat by her side, and gazing into her face.

'I slept quite late this morning; besides, I'm somewhat used to going without sleep,' said Louise. 'During my mother's last sickness I had but little sleep.'

'Miss Bruce—I would say Mrs. Comer—informs me that you sat once for your picture,' he said. 'Strange I should call Mrs. Comer Miss Bruce. I'm quite apt to confound names.'

'Perhaps there is a Miss Bruce who occupies a large share of your thoughts,' she replied. 'It is sometimes the case that young gentlemen have so many ladies in their minds, that they cannot tell which they love best.'

'It may be so with some, but I'm not in that dilemma,' he answered, carelessly laying his hand upon hers, and fastening his eyes on her parting lips.

She instantly withdrew her hand from under his, and turned upon him a rebuking gaze. He was sorely disappointed and chagrined. Yes, his anger was somewhat excited, but he was careful not to show it.

'O, I shall have a splendid picture!' he continued. 'Clinton is decidedly the best artist we have in the city. If he gets your forehead and hair right, I shall be much gratified.' And he raised his hand and smoothed back her hair from her forehead in a very loving manner. She suddenly motioned him away, as if there was poison in his touch. He could not divine what had happened. He was positive something had, and he suspected at once that Catherine Seymour had been filling her ears.

‘Why, my dear Louise, you treat me very coldly this evening,’ he continued. ‘If you knew how much I loved you, I feel as if you would let me seal it with a kiss.’

‘Never!’ she replied, in a firm voice and stern manner. ‘If you love me as you pretend you do, all I can say is, that I sincerely regret it. I never can reciprocate your attachment. There’s something in your face or manners, which makes the blood creep coldly about my heart. The more I see of you, the stronger is this feeling; therefore, I thought it my duty to speak thus plainly to you, before our acquaintance was extended any farther. I know not but you may be the most virtuous young man in the city, but my heart tells me to have no farther intercourse with you, and that voice I shall obey. Whether your object be honorable marriage or seduction, it is all the same to me. I cannot receive your visits any longer.’

He was thunderstruck at her declaration. His temper was excited, and he swore in his heart he would conquer. After some more conversation, he left her and sought Miss Bruce, to whom he communicated the reception she gave him. This hypocrite and bawd was as much astonished as he was. Her anger too began to rise.

‘Did she show such independence, and haughty coldness?’ asked Miss Bruce. ‘Well, I’ll teach her what her duty is. After all I have done for her mother and for her, I do n’t like to be treated in this way. I’ll bring Miss to her bearings.’

‘Do n’t you think that crafty Kate has been whispering something into her ears?’ he asked.

‘It is quite possible; but if she has, I will wring her neck for her,’ she replied. ‘I suppose she is offended with you since Louise has come. And in fact she was some, before. I will find out. Call again; and before then, I will have a talk with this drunkard’s daughter, and see who is mistress, she or I.’

He now left, with a promise to come again the next evening. He was determined to follow up this innocent girl, and was quite sanguine that he should finally conquer her, with the influence of Miss Bruce. The spirit of revenge, now, as well as other bad passions, urged him on to accomplish his hellish purposes.

CHAPTER IX.

'To lapse in fullness
Is sorer than to lie for need, and falsehood
Is worse in kings than beggars.'



RICHARD PRESTON — after his wife was buried — became more intemperate than he ever was before. The very evening following the funeral, he got most beastly drunk. He had money, but no one knew how he got it.

Blacker had fitted up and replenished his shop; but Dick was too proud now to drink in such a

low groggery. He had funds, and frequented more genteel rum establishments. He would get drunk in other places, and then go to Blacker's shop and blackguard its owner. Ever since he attempted to saw this rumseller's wood, he exercised a most inveterate hatred towards him. Twice Blacker called assistance, and thrust him from his premises. There were small portions of some days he would keep sober. He had been to see his daughter but once since she removed to her new home, and then he gave her fifty dollars; but her mistress knew not the fact. Louise was very reluctant to receive it, and importuned him very hard to know where he got so much money; but he always told her not to trouble herself about that, for he had a right to spend the money and so had she. The same day she sat for her picture, her aunt hung herself; but she knew it not. The next morning, Miss Bruce commenced a conversation with her upon the subject of her conduct towards Henry Luroff. She had talked with Catherine Seymour previously, but this false-hearted girl plumply and flatly denied ever having told Louise a single thing about Luroff or her establishment.

‘Well, my dear, how did you and Mr. Luroff get along last evening?’ inquired Miss Bruce.

‘Mrs. Comer, I know you speak in terms of great praise of Henry Luroff, but there is something about him which makes the blood curdle in my veins,’ replied Louise.

‘Why, my dear girl, I’m astonished to hear you talk thus,’ she said. ‘Mr. Luroff is one of the best men in the world, and loves you dearly.’

‘I’m very sorry if he does love me, for I’m certain I can never return his love,’ said Louise, in a voice which told this bawd that she meant what she said.

‘Never return his love!’ she repeated. ‘Why, you’re crazy! There is ’nt a girl in the city who would not jump at the chance of marrying him.’

‘Let them marry him, then,’ replied Louise. ‘Henry Luroff, in my opinion, is a libertine, and would ruin me if he had the power! I am not crazy, Mrs. Comer; but I should much rather be, awful as that is, than wed him.’

‘Miss Preston, you treat my opinions with too much contempt,’ she sternly replied, pacing the room in great agitation. ‘Why did I visit your sick mother? Why did I furnish you with money to keep you from starving? Why did I spend hours after hours in that house of poverty, misery, and sickness? Ah! little did I think I should find the daughter’s heart so black with ingratitude!’

‘God and your own soul know why you did all those deeds of charity, and exercised all those offices of kindness,’ said Louise. ‘You certainly smoothed the passage of my mother down to the grave, and comforted me in those hours of distress and anguish; but whether you benefited your own soul by it, Heaven only knows. God looks upon the heart; and if your motives were pure, they will be accounted to you for good; but if they were bad, you will gain nothing by your seeming good works.’

‘I did not take you out of poverty and wretchedness that you might become a preacher in my household,’ said Miss Bruce, while her eyes flashed with the fires of hell, and her bosom swelled with rage and hate.

‘May heaven forbid that I should minister before such a household altar, if my suspicions about this establishment turn out to be true,’ said Louise.

‘What are these wonderful suspicions, that so much alarm you,’ said this wicked woman.

‘That you are the keeper of a brothel!’ replied Louise, looking her hypocritical benefactress full in the face.

Miss Bruce, knowing what this good girl said was true, at first quailed under this denunciation; but soon recovering from her embarrassment, and feeling her temper rise, she said, ‘Some evil minded person has been filling your ears with slanderous reports, and you are credulous enough to believe them. You’re now in my power, and that power I shall exercise. You have the opportunity of living like a lady; if you desire to do so peaceably, well; but if you object, I shall make use of force.’

‘Living like a lady!’ repeated Louise, with a feeling of indignation. ‘To be the mistress of a libertine, you call living like a lady! By heavens, I swear I will suffer death in its most appalling form, before I will yield myself to such a life!’

Louise was astonished at her own feelings of moral courage. It seemed to her that some unseen power had nerved her for this emergency. Had she been told, twenty-four hours before this time, that she had courage to talk to this woman in such a manner, she would not have believed it. She was now thoroughly convinced that this woman was a keeper of a house of ill-fame. The truth burst upon her mind like magic, and she saw it as clear as a sunbeam.

‘Ah, young woman, you will think better of it soon,’ replied Miss Bruce. ‘Remember you are poor, and dependent on me for the daily bread you eat.’

‘Not so poor as you may imagine,’ replied Louise. ‘I have good health, and my mother taught me how to use my hands. I’m willing to work, but I will starve before I will earn my bread in the way you would have me. No! I would suffer a thousand deaths first!’

At this moment the door-bell rang, and Henry Luroff came in. He was so much beaten the evening before, that he could not stay away any longer. The moment he entered the room he saw there was trouble.

‘Ah,’ said Luroff, ‘is the young lady still obstinate? I did hope she would have some pleasant dreams last night, and become quite pliable. I have a proposition to make. I’m about to take a journey South, and should be pleased to have her company.’

‘There, Louise, there’s not a girl in the world who would not accept such an offer,’ said Miss Bruce, softening down a little, in the hope that Louise might repent and finally yield.

‘I’m sure there is one girl who will not accept the offer,’ said Louise, in a firm tone of voice, and in a stern manner.

‘Then starve!’ exclaimed this abandoned woman, grinding her teeth and stamping her right foot upon the floor in a great rage.

‘Yes, starve, say I!’ reiterated Luroff, laying his hand upon her shoulder, and siding up to her.

‘Away! thou moral leper!’ exclaimed Louise, striking his hand from her shoulder, and leaping from him as she would from a serpent.

‘Call me not by such names,’ he said, springing towards her, and seizing her about the waist. ‘You’re now in my arms, and here you must be.’

‘That’s right,’ said Miss Bruce; ‘she needs hugging; perhaps that will make her yield quietly, poor thing.’

The girl shrieked and struggled to clear herself from his embrace, but he was too strong for her.

‘Walk her off to her chamber;’ said Miss Bruce, ‘she’ll soon get over her spasm.’

Catherine Seymour, hearing the screams of Louise, rushed into the room, and exclaimed, ‘Why, Henry Luroff, you’re too bad; by heavens, if I were a man I would hurl you to the floor, and rescue your intended victim.’

While Louise was struggling in the arms of this libertine, and just as Catherine entered the room, Thomas Clinton and Edgar Thompson came to the outside of the house, and hearing a female scream, they did not stop to ring the bell, but hurried up stairs and rushed into the room. Luroff was in the act of dragging Louise across the room, with the intention of carrying her to her chamber.

‘Villain!’ exclaimed the young painter, springing upon Luroff like a tiger upon his prey, and hurling him to the floor.

‘O, save me!’ exclaimed the trembling girl, rushing into Clinton’s arms.

‘Bravely done!’ said Thompson, smiling at the prostrate Luroff.

Clinton pressed the fair maiden to his breast, and O, what emotions at that moment thrilled his soul! It seemed to him that he lived more time in one moment then, than he had for years. He felt her heart beat against his breast, like the bird’s when in the hands of the fowler. If he never loved before, he did then. Young Thompson looked upon the scene with a deeper interest than he ever felt in witnessing any

theatrical exhibition, however talented or powerful the actors. Luroff arose from the floor, and saw his intended victim in the arms of another; but his guilty conscience made him a coward, and he dared not attempt to show any fight. The young artist hurled him to the floor with too strong an arm. He feared and trembled. Miss Bruce stood like a statue, and never moved a finger; but her corrupt heart was burning with the fires of hell. If ever any woman was 'prepared for the devil and his angels,' this woman was. Clinton conducted the agitated and trembling Louise to a sofa, and seated her upon it. Then, confronting Luroff, he said, 'Scoundrel! what wickedness were you about to perpetrate? Did you intend to ruin this innocent girl, but for our timely interference?'

Luroff gazed upon him with an evil eye, but made no reply, and left the house with emotions of hate, such as wicked spirits feel. The corrupt keeper of the house, felt as though a rich prize was about to slip through her fingers; but she was determined to hold on and make the most of it.

'Why did you permit an innocent girl to be thus abused in your house?' asked Clinton.

'It is none of your business,' she replied; 'I consider you an intruder on my premises.'

'God knows I shall not willingly set my foot again within these polluted precincts,' said he. 'This young lady we shall remove from them without farther ceremony.'

'No, sir, you cannot do that without violating the law,' she replied.

'Violating the law!' he repeated. 'You talk of violating the law, thou pander to the worst passions of bad men!'

'But her mother gave her to me on her dying bed,' she said.

'O God! have mercy on her guilty, hypocritical soul!' exclaimed Louise, rising from the sofa, and confronting the abandoned creature. 'Yes, she told you I might come and live with you, but she then supposed you were a good woman. If her voice could be now heard from the grave it would be in praise of these gentlemen, who have rescued me from this wretched place.'

'But there is money to be paid for your board, and for that I gave you to keep you from starving,' said Miss Bruce.

'Make out your bill, miserable woman, and your money is ready,' said Clinton.

'I have money enough to pay the bill,' said Louise. 'Father gave me some the last time I saw him.'

'Your father!' repeated Miss Bruce. 'He's a drunkard, and had not money enough to buy a biscuit when your mother was sick.'

'Who is your father?' asked Clinton. 'Does he reside in the city?'

'Richard Preston,' she replied. 'He lives in the city, or did a few days ago.'

'Richard Preston!' repeated young Thompson. 'I know him well, and I see him now coming towards this house; see! is that your father?' he continued, pointing through the window.

'It is he!' exclaimed Louise, looking in the direction Thompson pointed.

The poor drunkard did not stop to ring any bell, but bolted into the house, and was soon in the room. He was somewhat intoxicated, but not so much but he could manage very well.

'News, Louise, for you, if you've not heard it,' said her father.

'What is it, father?' she anxiously inquired.

'Your Aunt Cottle is dead, and left you all her property — more than ten thousand dollars,' he replied. 'She made no will, and you are the sole heiress of all her estate! I want you to go with me immediately to her house; that is, to the house that was her's; but it is yours now.'

'Aunt Cottle dead!' exclaimed Louise.

'Yes, dead!' he replied. 'She was afraid she should come to want, so she concluded to hang herself to one of the beams in her woodshed.'

Louise was much affected at the melancholy news, but more by the indifference her father manifested in telling of it. Rum had made terrible work, not only with his physical, but also with his intellectual and moral nature.

'Make out your bill and I will settle it, for this young lady is about to leave this corrupt place, and I trust, leave it forever,' said Clinton. 'Put in every item, including the alms you gave when you acted the character of a saint, thou miserable hypocrite.'

'I will pay it,' said Louise; 'I have money enough.'

'No, Louise, keep your own money, and I will pay the wretched woman her bill,' replied her father.

Clinton insisted on paying the bill himself; but Preston would not permit him. The money was paid by the poor drunkard, and he and his daughter took their departure, as did the young artist and his friend.

The body of Mrs. Cottle was yet in the house when Louise went there, but it was buried the next day with due solemnity. She continued to occupy the house with her father, who still continued his downward course to the drunkard's grave. The young painter of course frequently visited this house.

After the departure of Louise from Miss Bruce's, the interior arrangements of her corrupt establishment became very much disturbed. Henry Luroff was occasionally there in search of new enterprises, after his signal defeat with Louise Preston. Catherine Seymour still resided under the same roof, determined upon seeking revenge as soon as she could find an opportunity to do so. Another young lady, 'fresh from the country,' as Miss Bruce said, was introduced into the house to supply the place made vacant by the departure of the drunkard's daughter. This girl became the mistress of Luroff, which circumstance added fuel to the fire of revenge which was burning in Catherine Seymour's heart. In less than one month from the time Louise Preston was so fortunately rescued from these 'polluted precincts,' Henry Luroff was found dead in this brothel, having been stabbed to the heart by an unknown hand. At the same time Luroff's body was found, Miss Bruce was laboring under severe vomitings. Physicians were called in, but they came too late. The poison had diffused its subtle essence through the blood, beyond the power of medicine to counteract its influence. It was evident that she had been poisoned; but whether the fatal potion was administered by her own hand, or by that of another, was not known. She died, in a few hours, a most terrible death, as she had lived a most wicked and abandoned life. Catherine Seymour was no longer an inmate of that establishment. She had fled, but whither no one knew but herself. Search was made for her, but she was never found. It was supposed she went South, under an assumed name, and came to some untimely end. No tidings were ever heard of her after the tragical deaths of Constantia Bruce and Henry Luroff.

Great efforts were made by Louise Preston, aided by Thomas Clinton, to save her father from the fate of the drunkard, but they proved unavailing. He still continued his habits of intoxication, in spite of all the moral influences which were thrown around him by his lovely daughter and her lover, the young artist. He grew worse and worse every day, and his hate of the rumselling Blacker, more inveterate and deadly. The poor inebriate continued to visit his shop, but he

never had been known to drink a drop of liquor in it since his agreement to saw the miserable owner's wood. Twice, he had been attacked by that most dreadful of all diseases, *delirium tremens*. He seemed to be laboring under a kind of monomania, for when he was most intoxicated, he would rave the worst against Blacker. The fell spirit of revenge against this rumseller was awakened in his heart, and no human power could control it. Blacker began to fear that the poor inebriate might injure him, so closely did he follow him up. Louise saw that her father changed for the worse every day, and became greatly alarmed about him. But for his conduct, she would have been happy. She labored night and day, for his reformation, but her labor was in vain. Almost every day, he visited Blacker's rum establishment, and asked the owner if he had any wood to saw. This apparently small circumstance, was constantly in his thoughts. He felt that a deep wound had been inflicted upon his honor, and he magnified the offence, molehill as it was, into a mountain. His pride had been alarmed, and his intemperance added daily to that alarm, until his mind became evidently diseased beyond his power to control it.

One morning he rose from his bed, in a trembling state, and hurried to Blacker's shop. The occupant had just opened it, and was wiping off his counter, and cleaning it from the effects of the last night's debauch. Preston rushed into the groggery, with his eyes rolling wildly in their sockets, and every muscle of his system in a great tremor. Blacker was frightened at the inebriate's wild appearance, and thought he would quiet him, by offering him a morning dram.

'Come, Dick, take a glass with me this morning to cut the cobwebs,' said Blacker, taking down one of his decanters, and placing it upon the counter.

Preston gazed upon him a moment in a wild manner, and then exclaimed, in a terrible voice: 'Ask me not to drink your poison, nor saw your wood, miserable wretch! I have been the means of the death of a miserable woman in this alley, who hung herself because I took from her what justly belonged to my wife; and now I intend to be the death of a worse being than a miser. Tremble! thou wicked man! Thou hast been the cause of the death of thousands better than yourself, and I have slain but one — or rather, caused her to slay herself. The cup of my iniquity is not yet full! I have but one more to slay. The devil calls for his own, and he shall have his due. Die! thou manslaughterer!'

And the unfortunate Dick Preston seized a stool, which stood on the floor near his feet, upon which many a poor drunkard had sat after spending his last cent for the rum-seller's poison, and struck Blacker upon the head. The edge of the drunkard's stool sank deep into the temple of Blacker, and he fell dead behind his counter.

Preston gazed upon the victim of his revenge, and exclaimed: 'There, miserable wretch! go and saw the devil's wood, to feed the flames of hell, in which your own soul will be tormented forever!'

Soon after Preston committed this fatal deed, he was seized with a fit of delirium tremens, from which he never recovered. Thus perished a poor drunkard, who was once a good-hearted, ambitious man. For many months the evils of intemperance were telegraphed in the flesh; but the deep and damning stain, which the intoxicating poison had made upon his soul, was but little known even to his most intimate friends. The last words he uttered, or the last which could be understood by those who stood around the dying drunkard, were: '*He's gone to saw the devil's wood.*'

We now turn to brighter pictures in our narrative. Thomas Clinton, the young and accomplished artist, in due time, became the husband of Louise Preston, the drunkard's daughter and the Belle of the Bowery. The picture, which he commenced under the pressure of such peculiar circumstances, and with such a beating heart and trembling hand, was finished in his calmer moments, but not under the patronage of the corrupt and abandoned Henry Luroff. Clinton painted a copy of it and gave it to his friend, Edgar Thompson, who still keeps it, not only as an evidence of the young artist's skill, but also as a specimen of female beauty, such as is seldom seen in this 'vale of tears.'

THE END.







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